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**INTERSUBJECTIVE ACTS AND RELATIONAL
SELVES IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN
ABORIGINAL AND AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND
MAORI WOMEN'S WRITING**

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Declaration

This is to certify that that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. Ideas and passages reproduced from other sources have been properly acknowledged. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Certain ideas and passages from Chapter 4 have been published as “Australian Aboriginal Memoirs and Memory: A Stolen Generations Trauma Narrative” in the special issue “Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism” of *Humanities* 4 (2015): 661-675.

Signed: Justine Seran

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Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamics of intersubjectivity and relationality in a corpus of contemporary literature by twelve Indigenous women writers in order to trace modes of subject-formation and communication along four main axes: violence, care, language, and memory. Each chapter establishes a comparative discussion across the Tasman Sea between Indigenous texts and world theory, the local and the global, self and community. The texts range from 1984 to 2011 to cover a period of growth in publishing and international recognition of Indigenous writing.

Chapter 1 examines instances of colonial oppression in the primary corpus and links them with manifestations of violence on institutional, familial, epistemic, and literary levels in Aboriginal authors Melissa Lucashenko and Tara June Winch's debut novels *Steam Pigs* (1997) and *Swallow the Air* (2006). They address the cycle of violence and the archetypal motif of return to bring to light the life of urban Aboriginal women whose ancestral land has been lost and whose home is the western, modern Australian city. Maori short story writer Alice Tawhai's collections *Festival of Miracles* (2005), *Luminous* (2007), and *Dark Jelly* (2011), on the other hand, deny the characters and reader closure, and establish an atmosphere characterised by a lack of hope and the absence of any political or personal will to effect change.

Chapter 2 explores caring relationships between characters displaying symptoms that may be ascribed to various forms of intellectual and mental disability, and the relatives who look after them. I situate the texts within a postcolonial disability framework and address the figure of the informal carer in relation to her "caree." Patricia Grace's short story "Eben," from her collection *Small Holes in the Silence* (2006), tells the life of a man with physical and intellectual disability from birth (the eponymous Eben) and his relationship with his adoptive mother Pani. The main character of Lisa Cherrington's novel *The People-Faces* (2004) is a young Maori woman called Nikki whose brother Joshua is in and out of psychiatric facilities.

Finally, the central characters of Vivienne Cleven's novel *Her Sister's Eye* (2002) display a wide range of congenital and acquired cognitive impairments, allowing the author to explore how the compounded trauma of racism and sexism participates in (and is influenced by) mental disability.

Chapter 3 examines the materiality and corporeality of language to reveal its role in the formation of (inter)subjectivity. I argue that the use of language in Aboriginal and Maori women's writing is anchored in the racialised, sexualised bodies of Indigenous women, as well as the locale of their ancestral land. The relationship between language, body, and country in Keri Hulme's *the bone people* (1984) and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006) are analysed in relation to orality, gesture, and mapping in order to reveal their role in the formation of Indigenous selfhood.

Chapter 4 explores how the reflexive practice of life-writing (including fictional auto/biography) participates in the decolonisation of the Indigenous self and community, as well as the process of individual survival and cultural survivance, through the selective remembering and forgetting of traumatic histories. Sally Morgan's Aboriginal life-writing narrative *My Place* (1987), Terri Janke's Torres Strait Islander novel *Butterfly Song* (2005), as well as Paula Morris and Kelly Ana Morey's Maori texts *Rangatira* (2011) and *Bloom* (2003) address these issues in various forms. Through the interactions between memory and memoirs, I bring to light the literary processes of decolonisation of the writing/written self in the settler countries of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This study intends to raise the profile of the authors mentioned above and to encourage the public and scholarly community to pay attention and respect to Indigenous women's writing. One of the ambitions of this thesis is also to expose the limits and correct the shortcomings of western, postcolonial, and gender theory in relation to Indigenous women writers and the Fourth World.

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Introduction:

from *terra nullius* to Treaty Discourse

There is no future and no past, only a long, isolated now

I am not connected to past relations

I am not connected to future generations

I am pulled away from the flow of time.

[...]

As a Native ancestor and a Native descendant.

Shandra Spears

Tauivi reading these stories must make a leap sideways,

for this reality is not their reality.

Hine Tihi and Ruth Gerson

*This is my story: it is a story about not being from the desert,
not speaking my traditional language and not wearing ochre. [...]*

*But my story is of the journey of being a proud Wiradjuri woman,
just not necessarily being the Blackfella – the so-called ‘real Aborigine’ –
some people, perhaps even you, expect me to be.*

Anita Heiss

This thesis explores the dynamics of intersubjectivity and relationality, that is to say the ways people relate to themselves, each other, and the community. The aim of this study is to determine how subject-formation and relationships are articulated in a cross-section of late 20th and early 21st-century Aboriginal and Māori women's writing, from Sally Morgan's 1987 *My Place* to Alexis Wright's 2006 *Carpentaria*, and from Keri Hulme's 1984 *the bone people* to Paula Morris's 2011 *Rangatira*. The texts that form the primary corpus are from the 1980s to the 2010s and cover a period of growth in publishing and international recognition of Indigenous writing, while the regional origins of the authors ensure that voices from the North Island to the South Island of Aotearoa and from Western Australia to New South Wales, north and south Queensland, and the Torres Strait Islands are being heard. The literary field of contemporary Indigenous women's writing is not very well known to mainstream readers, especially since Indigenous literature is often subsumed within the category of postcolonial writing. In this thesis I examine the specificities of contemporary Aboriginal and Māori women's writing and argue that the modes of intersubjectivity and relationality at play in the texts can be organised in four main themes around which the chapters are articulated: violence, care, language, and memory.

I would like to mention in this introduction the sustained need to reconcile my concern not to replicate white arrogance and power imbalance with the academic imperative of research and criticism. I believe it is necessary to acknowledge this when reading texts by authors with a different background from that of the researcher. Kimberle Crenshaw points out in her seminal article introducing the notion of intersectionality that "[r]ace, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination" participating in the marginalisation and exclusion of difference (1242). Hence a common misunderstanding on the part of liberals who may believe that they are being progressive and tearing down the straitjacket of categories when they "don't see race" or think women should be "judged on abilities alone." In fact, Crenshaw continues, "delineating difference" can be "the source of social empowerment and reconstruction" whereas "ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups" (1242). Consequently, issues of collective and individual identity (and identity-formation) are paramount, and their place in a corpus of contemporary

Indigenous women's writing from Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand will be explored along those lines.

In this thesis I attempt to replicate the authors' commitment to "doing the right thing" with my own. "Is there a role for non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenist research?" asks Australian Aboriginal academic Lester Irabinna Rigney (2006 43). He answers: "the role of non-Indigenous researchers and universities [...] is to support the work of Indigenous communities and their researchers to create avenues to facilitate such support" (Rigney, 2006 44). Supporting Indigenous researchers as a postgraduate student based in a European institution has not been possible for me so far, but I am keen to follow Rigney's guidelines in the future. According to him, the aim of Indigenist research is to develop "an anticolonial cultural critique of Australian history in an attempt to arrive at appropriate strategies to decolonize epistemologies and to create new ones" (1999, 110). Like Māori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Rigney believes that Indigenous people must be involved in "defining, controlling, and owning epistemologies and ontologies that value and legitimate the Indigenous experience. Indigenous perspectives must infiltrate the structures and methods of the entire research academy" (1999, 114). The core tenets of Indigenist research are therefore the principles of resistance, political integrity, and privileging Indigenous voices; Indigenist research must be overtly political and blur the lines between scientific observation and activist advocacy (Rigney 1999, 116, 118).

Indigenist research for Rigney is "research that attempts to support the personal, community, cultural, and political struggles of Indigenous Australians to carve out a way of being for ourselves in Australia in which there can be healing from past oppressions and cultural freedom in the future" (1999, 117). In this thesis I aim to show how contemporary Indigenous women writers negotiate the impetuses of "healing from past oppressions" and "cultural freedom in the future." I attempt as much as possible to consult Indigenous secondary sources and refer to Indigenous scholars, but also activists and social commentators who do not have an academic platform, following Marcia Langton's criticism that "[s]ome intellectuals even

demand that the Native answer back in a refereed journal, say something about the French intellectuals, [...] and speak from the hyperluxury of the first world with the reflexive thoughts of a well-paid, well-fed, detached scholar” (1993 84). Social media and blogs are favoured platforms for a rich polyphony of Indigenous voices, which are no less valid on the issues that touch their community than classically trained academics.¹

The introduction of my Masters by Research dissertation on Māori fiction in the 1980s was articulated around the following questions: What is Māori literature? Who is Māori? English Literature or Māori Literature in English?² The categorising impulse present in the latter question is perhaps the most debated in academic circles, as the recent resurgence of World Literature as a discipline attests.³ These (and others) are the questions we still need to ask and consider about contemporary Indigenous writing, for if the 1980s were the decade of writing back to the centre, the late 1990s, 2000s, and early 2010s have been about writing a communal self back into the global narrative. On social media, free and open engagement between and among Indigenous peoples has given rise to the hashtag #DearNonNatives in the US, the online-based Idle No More movement in Canada, and the Twitter account @IndigenousX in Australia among others. In early 2015, the 40th anniversary conference of the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh was sadly cancelled. Its theme, however, was most exciting: “Decolonization in the Digital Age: New Global Contexts for Indigenous Self-Determination.” At the time of the call for papers it gave rise to Chapter 5 of this thesis on Digital Indigeneity, which was never to see the light. Despite dropping said chapter from the final thesis, I retain a strong interest in the potential of digital technology to aid decolonisation movements.

¹ Among them is @IndigenousX, a rotation curation Twitter account founded by Aboriginal educator Luke Pearson to showcase Indigenous Australians on social media.

² Seran, Justine. *The Spiral and the Cross: Between Two Worlds, Influences of Another Time and Another Place on Maori Literature*. Unpublished dissertation submitted for the degree of Master by Research at the Université Lumière Lyon 2 in June 2011.

³ *The Routledge Companion to World Literature* was published as late as 2011, and the official publisher’s website states that World Literature is a “burgeoning and popular field [...] increasingly important to academic teaching and research”: <https://www.routledge.com/products/9780415570220> (accessed 12 Nov. 2015).

There is still a long way to go, as demonstrated by the fact that the global ignorance of Indigenous cultures has permitted the longest ever running hoax on Wikipedia (live for nearly a decade), focused around a fake Australian Aboriginal divinity called Jar'Edo Wens.⁴ Teaching is often upheld as the panacea to remedy this paucity of knowledge and lack of engagement with Indigenous issues and epistemologies. However, Australian Aboriginal writer Anita Heiss remarks on her experience of higher education teaching that “roughly only 10 per cent of our Indigenous studies students were Australian, while the rest were international students most from the United States of America and a few from Europe” (2012 116). This is also my personal experience as an exchange student at the University of Queensland taking ABTS3000, a 3rd year undergraduate course on Aboriginal politics and political issues taught by an Aboriginal lecturer: the class was composed of 5 girls in total, including 2 Australians, 1 English, 1 American, and 1 French. The lack of interest of mainstream Australia in Aboriginal affairs at academic level is a reflection of social attitudes and has deep historical roots (Heiss, 2007 1)

Anita Heiss and Peter Minter remark in the preface to their *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature* that “just as the Crown’s acquisition of 1770 had made sovereign Aboriginal land *terra nullius*, it also made Aboriginal people *vox nullius*” (2). One of the aims of contemporary Aboriginal writing is to reclaim this voice through the remaking of the English language to serve an Aboriginal consciousness in the creation of a *vox viva*, or living voice. The overturning of the *terra nullius* doctrine in 1992 paved the way for Native Title claims to return the land to Aboriginal communities. This development paralleled that of Aotearoa, which contrary to Australia was colonised on the legal basis of the Treaty of Waitangi, and where the Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 to judge claims of Treaty breach, thus politicising Indigenous research through the demand for legal and other experts who could engage with western discourses (Tuhiwai Smith 132). Nowadays, calls for a treaty similar to the one the British signed with the Māori can be heard in Australia in order to consolidate Aboriginal claims and provide new frameworks for

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2015/04/15/the-great-wikipedia-hoax/> (accessed 26 Aug. 2015).

Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations.⁵ As “[t]he context of change, instability and uncertainty faced by post-industrial societies positions indigenous peoples and indigenous issues in different sorts of spaces with different possibilities,” it is more crucial than ever to listen to Indigenous stories and voices on their own terms (Tuhiwai Smith 108).

Defining Intersubjectivity and Relationality

This thesis examines the notions of relationality and intersubjectivity in the corpus, understood as the way people communicate and relate to themselves, each other, and the community at large, as well as how this influences the construction of selfhood and identity. It is particularly crucial to examine these key concepts in Indigenous women’s writing in order to listen to their voices and internal perspectives, as opposed to externally imposed definitions. Rita Charon notes a recent interest on the part of literary scholars in “the intersubjective events of authorship, readership, interpretation, and influence” (51). These four events describe relationships between the author and herself (authorship), the author and the readers (readership), the readers and the author (interpretation), and the author and other authors (influence). Such exotextual relationships are significant in Indigenous women’s writing, as the intersubjectivity of the authors is discernible at personal level in the following extract from Heiss’s interview of fellow Australian Aboriginal author Melissa Lucashenko: “Heiss: What book(s) had an impact on your life and why? Lucashenko: The book that has influenced me most is *The Bone People* by Māori author Keri Hulme. Reading this showed me that Indigenous voices could be taken seriously by the literary community.”⁶ Heiss, Lucashenko, and Hulme are all present in this thesis, along with many others, most of whom are real-life

⁵ For more about the calls for a Treaty in Australia:
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/21/soft-recognition-alone-will-not-resolve-indigenous-australias-unfinished-business?CMP=share_btn_tw (accessed 07 Nov. 2015).

⁶ The rest of the interview can be found here:
http://www.austlit.edu.au/news/2013/11/19/melissa_lucashenko_in_conversation_with_blackwords.html (accessed 21 Nov. 2013).

acquaintances and influence each other's growth as Indigenous women writers through their relationships with each other.

Intersubjectivity here is not used in its strict social science meaning, but instead to define the multiple and interconnected processes of subject-formation and relationship-building, hence the focus on acts and selves rather than abstract concepts. Relationality also encompasses the idea of communication between characters and within the characters themselves. Lucy Blackman remarks that this is highly dependent on socialisation: “[w]e often use the term ‘communication’ when really we mean that we have observed in another human being a behavior from which we derive meaning” (153). Communication is therefore socially constructed and culturally contingent. As an outsider to both Indigenous and settler cultures, for example, I acknowledge that the interpretations and assumptions I make in this thesis are informed by my own experience, my personal reading of literary theory, and my inescapably limited knowledge of Australian Aboriginal and Māori languages, customs, and political issues. In a way this thesis itself is an intersubjective act and a colonial encounter due to the historically asymmetrical relationship between relational selves, in the present case a white researcher and Indigenous authors.

Postcolonial writing in general is often concerned with identity, especially with the retrieval of the effaced or silenced identities of the colonised. In this respect it departs from most postmodern literature, even though as Gillian Whitlock remarks: “[m]ulti-layered subjectivity and the shifting self are not the prerogatives of the metropolitan postmodern subject alone” (5). It is a different self however, as Charon argues the following in contemporary life-writing: “Postmodernism’s fragmentation [...] gives way to a quilt-unity of virtual wholeness made up of disparate but interweavable pieces” (73, 75). Her image of the quilt-unity is useful to conceptualise the primary corpus of this thesis with its disparate yet interweavable texts and zones of overlap and conflict, as will become evident in the chapters exploring intersubjectivity through the relational modes of violence, care, language, and memory.

Subjects and selves form the focal point of my analysis. Marianne Hirsch’s work on women’s writing highlights that “[d]ifference or otherness [...] is not an

external difference, but an otherness within – within a circumscribed cultural group, such as a family, and, also, within the self, reflecting the subject’s own plurality over a lifetime, the intersubjectivity that is subjectivity” (1997 83). The subject’s plurality is a major theme in the texts under scrutiny in this thesis, since most protagonists are young Indigenous women on the cusp of adulthood whose character development includes exploring and coming to terms with their own subjectivity and their family relationships in the context of their racial and cultural affiliation(s). If “fragmentation has been the consequence of imperialism,” then the quest for wholeness through writing is a decolonial intersubjective act (Tuhiwai Smith 29; Mignolo 108-9). Australian Aboriginal scholar Marcia Langton writes that “self is a subjective colony” and advocates the use of self-reflexive art forms to enact the decolonisation of the self, which I argue in this thesis is the case in Indigenous women’s writing (1993 54).

“Indigenous” is a useful term to designate native populations as the first people of the land, yet as many critics point out it is also a misnomer and only one of several “nested identities” (Tuhiwai Smith 129). In both Australia and Aotearoa, Indigenous people define their cultural and ethnic identity as layers. Thus Tuhiwai Smith explains that, for the Māori, “[o]ne commonly used way to introduce yourself by naming the mountain, the river, the tribal ancestor, the tribe and the family” locating the self “in a set of identities which have been framed geographically, politically and genealogically” (129; Rika-Heke, 1997 171). This is similar to the multi-layered Aboriginal patterns of kinship and belonging, and raises the question of the interplay of Indigenous cultures and intersubjectivity: to which extent is the role of violence, care, language, and memory in the construction of selfhood and community impacted by the authors’ background? This thesis, however, does not aim at answering this question fully, but rather examines how the themes outlined above participate in intersubjectivity and relationality. It is also worth asking whether gender for Indigenous women is but one of those nested identities, or conversely forms the root or “base layer” of identity-formation.

Gendering Indigeneity

Women's writing may represent a contested category among critics, but choosing to research literature by Indigenous women and showcasing the primary corpus were the first decisions I took during the drafting process of my PhD proposal. Quickly, what was initially meant to be an exploration of aesthetics and politics in Keri Hulme and Alexis Wright became an analysis of works by twelve authors, six Indigenous Australians and six Māori, spanning three decades up to the contemporary moment. This decision was partly motivated by the need to look at women's writing to find stories that differ from men's narratives, but also to consider a wide corpus in order to be as representative as possible and justify statements that might otherwise appear to be generalisations (Tusitala Marsh, 1999 339).

Although the label "women's writing" is debatable, one should bear in mind Crenshaw's remark that however much we might want to do away with them, "categories have meaning and consequences," especially for women of colour whose interests are often neglected by both women's liberation and antiracist movements (1297). As a result, Indigenous women's "analyses have emerged from the intersections formed through political engagements with Western feminism and their own indigenous communities" (Tuhiwai Smith 130). Indigenous women critique both progressive movements for silencing their voices and challenge outside constructions of their identity by white supremacist patriarchal states, white women, and Indigenous men. The necessity of gendering Indigenous debates in settler countries is supported by the fact that, historically, "[c]olonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations that reached out across all spheres of indigenous society" (Tuhiwai Smith 152). This is explored further and illustrated in the following chapters.

In this framework, Indigenous feminism is a decolonial act aiming at deconstructing western patriarchy within and outside Indigenous communities. One result of Indigenous women's engagements with feminism and antiracism is "the burgeoning of a distinctive indigenous women's literature that actively works against Western literary categories," which I explore in this thesis (Tuhiwai Smith 130). As racialised and gendered subjects, Indigenous women have often figured in literature

in English as characters in white men's texts, hence the resulting trope of the exotic, sexually available black or Polynesian woman in colonial literature (Sutton Beets 17, 23; Suaalii 93). Indigenous women's writing in part responds to this legacy and deconstructs these stereotypes, but it is also forward-looking and addresses a primarily Indigenous readership. Understanding how the authors mediate the multifaceted goals of self-expression and community advancement is crucial to the study of the literature. Indeed, Australian Aboriginal scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson states that "[a]s subjects of their own gaze, the personal is political in Indigenous women's texts" (2). The authors are aware that their individual stories are part of a larger narrative and they shoulder the responsibility of representation towards their ancestors, contemporaries, and future generations within an explicit space-time continuum.

The fact that the present work focuses on women's writing as its primary material, including fiction and non-fiction, criticism and social commentary, does not mean that gender is the main focus of this thesis. Indeed, as a feminist researcher I take for granted the intrinsic value of women's writing and wish for it to stand on equal footing with men's writing, without being necessarily viewed as gendered. In fact, men's writing is equally gendered and as such I decide to pay closer attention to the representations of intersubjectivity and relationality as mediated by the female experience of the authors, rather than gender and intersubjectivity. A non-gendered approach to literature may be impossible in a patriarchal culture, and indeed I am not suggesting that gender does not play a part in either the writing or the reception of the corpus, but overall the purpose of my focus on intersubjectivity and relationality in women's writing is not to take gender itself as the main object of study. If the texts are not necessary feminist, I argue that they can benefit from being read through a feminist lens to reveal the complex relational dynamics of Indigenous women's lives and stories.

In fact, relationships between women and men do not form the bulk of the intersubjective acts under scrutiny in this thesis, instead it is the relationality of Indigenous women with themselves and each other, whether contemporaries, ancestors, or descendants, that comes to the fore in their writing. Mary Helen

Washington perceives a similar tendency in African-American women's writing when she asserts that "there is a connection between the black woman writer's sense of herself as part of a link in generations of women, and her decision to write" (161). The transgenerational aspect focusing on relationships between women of the same family is also central to the literatures of Aboriginal and Māori women as part of the quest for a unified self. Yet, Washington continues, "[s]elfhood is not defined negatively as separatedness from others, nor is it defined narrowly by the individual dyad – the child and the mother – but on the larger scale as the ability to recognize one's continuity with the larger community" (159). Theirs is a productive relationship giving birth to intersubjectivity. Despite historical and cultural differences, the position of African-Americans within American society and the legacy of the civil rights movement have led many Indigenous people to look across the Pacific for roles models in decolonial struggles.

Who is Indigenous? What is postcolonial?

The 1974 meeting of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) reported that the term Indigenous "refers to people living in countries which have a population composed of different ethnic or racial groups who are descendants of the earliest populations living in the area, and who do not, as a group, control the national government of the countries within which they live" (Allen 2003). According to archaeological findings, the Māori were the first human inhabitants of mainland Aotearoa, and since the Pākehā, or white New-Zealanders, control the political and economic institutions, Māori people qualify to be called Indigenous (M. King, 2003 19, 49-50).⁷ Similarly, Aboriginal people are the descendants of the first people of Australia but they do not control the Australian government. The following year in 1975, the *Solemn Declaration* of collective indigenous identity released for the first meeting of the WCIP stated that "the basis for self-definition [...] will be indigenous 'memories' and 'consciousness', a sense of belonging to the narrative's protagonist

⁷ The Chatham Islands were home to another Polynesian people, the Moriori (M. King, 2003 55).

‘We.’ In other words, that is an identity constructed through self-reflexive ‘emblems of differentiation’ rather than ‘objective’ criteria” (Allen 211). Thus, Maoriness and Aboriginality are not strictly ethnic facts, which would be quantifiable and linked with a certain amount of Indigenous “blood.” Indigeneity is about self-identifying as Indigenous, being endorsed by an Indigenous community, and sharing common ancestors. According to this definition, about six billion people in the global south can be defined as Indigenous, whether they choose the label or not (Mignolo 2012).

The Māori are Polynesians and share a common Polynesian heritage and the experience of colonialism with Indigenous populations from the neighbouring islands, who exert mutual influence on each other and maintain a dialogue together (Te Punga Somerville xxi-xxiii; Grace, 1999 71).⁸ Regional themes and techniques transcend nations, but here I look at Māori writing as part of a global Indigenous corpus rather than a Polynesian one. In contrast with Australia, Canada, or the United States, Māori people in Aotearoa/New Zealand may seem to have a more secure status than Aboriginal or Native American people, but they are still marginalised.⁹ Māori people represent 15% of the population of the country, the Māori Party gains seats in the House of Representatives at every election, and te reo Māori, the Māori language, is an official language widely studied in schools even by non-Māori pupils. Despite relative achievements, Māori people are over-represented among unemployed, unskilled workers, prison inmates, and school dropouts. This social unbalance fosters racial tensions which are reflected in literature, as “Maori life is significantly marked by poverty, illness and other indicators of an inadequate connection to the general social welfare” and “contemporary Maori fiction emerged from a tradition of writing in English which for a long time tended to marginalise Maori people in both cultural and socio-economic processes” (Heim 20-1).

⁸ Although the term “Polynesia” itself is debated since it is a 19th century coinage by French explorer Jules Dumont d’Urville and not a self-defined term like Pasifika for instance (Keown, 2007 13). Some Indigenous Pacific people also use the term Nesian to group Polynesians, Micronesians, and Melanesians together.

⁹ For an Australian Aboriginal take on the differences between Māori and Indigenous Australians see this video from SBS: <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2013/10/07/how-do-indigenous-rights-compare-those-maori> (accessed 07 Nov. 2015).

In 1981, the Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs issued the *Report on a Review of the Administration of the Working Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, which states that “[a]n Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he [sic] lives” (quoted in Heiss, 2012 123). This new definition in line with the WCIP guidelines marks a step towards returning the power of self-determination to Indigenous people, a far cry from previous racial policies bent on classifying and categorising according to “blood quantum.” Aboriginality as an ethnic, cultural, political, and historical identity formation remains a highly contested site however. During the 1980s, Indigenous Australian identity was “formulated in terms of past Aboriginal culture and in terms of their current placement as a minority group in white Australian society,” while today “concepts of Aboriginality are increasingly presented as contingent and tactical, responsive to changing political contexts and agendas” (Whitlock 155-6). This growing emphasis on the individual experience of Aboriginality and fluid identities reflects the work of progressive activism and anti-essentialist scholarship to acknowledge diversity within minority groups. While the dominant (white) society attempts to assimilate and control minorities through multicultural policies allocating limited resources and public space to various groups, Jeremy Beckett notes that, “[f]or the bearers, however, ethnicity is founded on a sense of uniqueness” (5). The specific situation of Indigenous people, marginalised in their own homeland, supports claims of uniqueness and critiques of the settler-colonial state’s homogenising impulses.

In the widely read *Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin argue that Indigeneity “intersects with notions of race, marginality, imperialism, and identity. [...] At its simplest the argument boils down to a dispute over whether [...] the indigenous people of an invaded colony are the only ‘truly colonised’ group” (1995, 213). This is a point of debate among scholars and writers, which brings us back to the very definition of postcolonialism and the following question: can settler colonies ever be postcolonial, or should the term only apply to nations that have gained independence from former colonial powers and whose first peoples control the government?

During the closing drinks of the Postcolonial Studies Association 2013 Biennial Conference at Kingston University London, I talked with the white Australian painter Margaret Coxall who designed the artwork for the poster and programme cover. With what seemed like pride as well as extant cultural cringe, she announced: “I’m a colonial.”¹⁰ This ambiguous statement hints at an on-going complicated relationship with colonialism for contemporary settlers, neither claiming colonised status nor acknowledging colonising status (Turner 22; Keown and Murray 2013, 609, 616). Settler-colonial nations are, by definition, countries that remain dominated by the descendants of the colonisers of old, even after their governments have gained political independence. The terms of invasion, colonisation, and settlement are ideologically freighted, but they are used in this thesis as synonyms to refer to the process of taking over Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to do justice to the arguments supporting each theory.

As the title of Nolwazi Mjwara’s article on Walter Mignolo states: “Coloniality is far from over, it is all over.”¹¹ Indigenous people have intimate knowledge of this, and many are consequently suspicious of postcolonial discourse. Although many postcolonial theoretical tools may be useful for Indigenous writers and readers, Indigenous critical writing and postcolonial analysis cannot be substituted for one another (Anderson 23). Beyond the seemingly never-ending discussion of the semantics of “post-,” it is crucial to keep in mind the very immediate experience of colonisation of Indigenous people in settler countries. Jace Weaver, Director of the Institute of Native American Studies at the University of Georgia, sums the issue thus:

Postcolonial critique provides a useful tool for analysing Native literatures, which reflect these different pulls on identity, and for deconstructing the ironic and destructive images imposed upon indigenes. As long, however, as Western nation-states remain kleptocracies based on the taking of native lands, as long as autochthones are denied sovereignty and are pushed toward assimilation into the dominant culture, the postcolonial moment for indigenous peoples will not have arrived. (233)

¹⁰ Personal conversation. Kingston University London. 13 September 2013.

¹¹ <http://witsvuvuzela.com/2013/08/09/coloniality-is-far-from-over-it-is-all-over/> (Accessed 25 Jan. 2014).

The postcolonial moment exists as a theoretical space in the psyche of postcolonialists, but it is not a reality for Indigenous people in settler/invaser societies. Indeed educator Powhiri Rika-Heke writes:

And Postcolonialism? Well, whatever that particular theory is about, it has very little to do with me as an indigenous person, as a First Nation woman from Aotearoa who was born into a colonial society, has lived with both the positive and negative consequences of a colonial society, and who will die in a society which will go on colonizing me and my people and other disempowered peoples who choose to make Aotearoa their home (1997 180).

Moreover, Tuhiwai-Smith communicates “the sneaking suspicion that the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or re-authorizing the privilege of non-indigenous academics because the field of ‘post-colonial’ discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous people” (24; Anderson 23).

If the term postcolonial does not carry a universal meaning, then we can argue that it applies more to our approach to reading the texts than to the texts themselves. Indeed, for Nathaniel O’Reilly postcolonialism is “a way [...] of reading a dialogue that begins from the moment of colonization itself” (17). Yet the term Indigenous is also problematic for “it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different” (Tuhiwai Smith 6). Once we acknowledge that Indigenous people across the world belong to distinct cultures with differing histories, we can turn to productive zones of comparison and exchange.

Comparing on what grounds? An ethical justification

Comparative literary studies is a controversial area for it carries the suspicion of erasing difference and favouring a quest for commonalities (Bassnett 2; Forsdick and Murphy 12-3). Why then am I proposing to read contemporary Indigenous women’s writing across the Tasman Sea? Despite being ethnically and culturally

distinct, Aboriginal and Māori people share the common experience of European “discovery” and British colonisation, even though they were treated differently, invaded and settled at different times and by different people, as contemporary accounts attest (B. Smith 329). Nowadays, the links between the two peoples are more subtle but no less intricate: in 2015, Māori Twitter was awash with messages of support for the campaign known as “SOS BLAK AUSTRALIA, Stop the Forced Closure of Aboriginal Communities” in response to then-PM Tony Abbott’s comment of support to the announcement by Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett’s that he would stop funding for 150 remote communities.¹² Conversely, Aboriginal calls for a Treaty regularly reference the Treaty of Waitangi as an example despite its shortcomings. It should also be noted that Australia hosts the largest Māori population outside of Aotearoa and this growing community is increasingly using new technologies and social media to remain connected to Indigenous traditions back home, for example through the live broadcast of tangi, or funerals, on the Internet.¹³

Asserting the uniqueness of Indigenous people in the contemporary moment as I do in this thesis means adopting a localised, as opposed to essentialist or universalist, position. Tuhiwai Smith argues that Indigenous people have distinct epistemological traditions that frame their engagement with the world, yet “[t]here are also shared discourses, visions and aspirations that resonate across many indigenous contexts – cultural and linguistic survival, self-determination and the right to remain indigenous” for example (218). I explore the resonances of such shared discourses as they pertain to the construction of identity and relationships along the axes of violence, care, language, and memory. Indeed Michael Rothberg in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* regards comparison as a site of constructive, dynamic praxis for “producing new objects and new lines of sight – and not simply as reproducing already given entities that either are or are not ‘like’ other already given entities” (18-9). This is what I

¹² <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/sosblakaustalia-stop-forced-closure-aboriginal-communities> and <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/01/sosblakaustalia-stop-the-forced-closure-of-aboriginal-communities-indigenous> (accessed 27 April 2016).

¹³ <http://news.tangatawhenua.com/2013/01/maori-culture-adapting-to-presence-in-online-media/> (accessed 27 April 2016).

attempt to do in this thesis when comparing texts by Aboriginal and Māori authors in order to reveal new lines of enquiry and modes of engagement with intersubjectivity and relationality via the four themes, without imposing commonalities, or conversely seeking out differences. The starting point of the analysis is the primary corpus itself rather than the themes, which arise from close reading of the texts, and I believe this approach allows for an ethical comparative literary study. The main argument is that, in both Australian Aboriginal and Aotearoa Māori women's writing, violence, care, language, and memory function as the main modes of subject-formation and construction of relationships, as the identity of the self and community as well as the relationship between self and community are made by (and remake) the role of the four themes.

It is noteworthy that trauma is the most complex theme to work with in this framework, hence its position in the final chapter on memory. Indeed, Rothberg notes that “[v]ictimization proves not to be the best grounds for solidarity since processes of victimization take multiple, contradictory forms and erode the bases of selfhood necessary for relationship with others” (163). Trauma does not preclude Indigenous solidarity but it arguably fails to provide a productive platform for collaboration, as opposed to forward-looking notions such as healing, survival, and revival. Nonetheless, the association of the transmission of traumatic memories with survival allows me to articulate this thesis as a closed loop by ending the final chapter on the motif of the return journey home, also present in the first chapter.

The linguistic medium of most Indigenous literature in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is English, although some authors do publish in te reo Māori and in Aboriginal languages.¹⁴ But does the use of English mean that we are dealing with English literature? In academic circles of the English-speaking world, Indigenous literature is considered as part of Commonwealth or, increasingly, postcolonial studies, and taught accordingly alongside the larger corpora of Southeast Asian, African, and Caribbean literatures, separated from British and American literatures. Moreover, when one thinks about writing from Australia and New

¹⁴ The Māori publishing house Huia, located in Wellington, for example, is committed to promoting a diversity of Māori perspectives in both te reo and English: <https://www.huia.co.nz/?sn=8&st=1> (accessed 10 Nov. 2015).

Zealand, the names that come up are more likely to be Katherine Mansfield and Patrick White than Hone Tuwhare and David Unaipon, respectively credited as the first Māori and Aboriginal authors to be published in English.¹⁵ Indigenous writing in the Pacific area is thus the newest within the corpus of English-language literature and challenges the relevance of such a compartmentalisation.

If there is a degree of linguistic variation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous writing, including the relationship with orality and the use of code-switching which will be examined in a later chapter, we may also wonder about the specificity of the themes tackled by Indigenous authors (McRae 7, 13). Native American writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor claims that “Native selves are stories, traces of discourse, and the tease of presence” (1998 20). The texts under scrutiny in this thesis are discursive stories (re)asserting Indigenous presence in the face of genocide and widespread ignorance. As long as the publishing industry remains in the hands of westerners, however, there will be no guarantee against the commodification of Indigenous material for white consumption. Tuhiwai Smith reminds us of the role of colonisation in this state of affairs: “the people and their culture, the material and the spiritual, the exotic and the fantastic, became not just the stuff of dreams and imagination, or stereotypes and eroticism, but of the first truly global commercial enterprise: *trading the Other*” (92-3; original emphasis; Huggan, 2001).

A passionate advocate for Indigenous literature and literacy through her role as Ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, Heiss defines the purposes of Australian Aboriginal literature thus:

it records our ‘truths’ about history; it functions as a tool for reconciliation, allowing non-Indigenous Australians to engage with us in non-confrontational ways; it provides a means of self-representation in Australian and world literatures and assists understanding of the diversity

¹⁵ Hone Tuwhare’s poetry collection *No Ordinary Sun*, published in 1964, was the first book-length literary work published by a Māori, and David Unaipon’s poems, in the 1930s, were the first fiction texts.

of our identities; finally, it challenges subjective and often negative media stereotypes and interpretations of our lives.¹⁶ (2012 279)

Thus, Indigenous literature differs from non-Indigenous literature by its functions, if not by its fundamental nature. It has multiple interlocutors who read on different levels, from Indigenous readers finding a record of “their truths” to non-Indigenous readers finding their prejudices challenged. This contradicts the idea that a literary work can be written for a certain audience to the exclusion of all others, present for example in accusations that Sally Morgan’s *My Place* (1987) addresses primarily a white Australian readership and therefore cannot be “true” (i.e. authentic) Aboriginal literature (Huggins 461; Mudrooroo, 1990 162).¹⁷

Why does literature seem to be a privileged medium for the expression and exploration of intersubjectivity in a comparative framework? Susan Stanford Friedman notes that “[w]riting contains the locations of identity in motion, the palimpsests of the scattered self” (207). The postcolonial, postmodern self is scattered and shifting and finds a productive path in this unsettlement, for a whole, stable self is only desirable when its opposite is pathologised by the dominant discourse (Roth 10). Without claiming a therapeutic effect to writing, we must consider the decision to write as intricately linked with the desire to express a contemporary Indigenous female identity, a process Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe as “an articulation *through* interrogation, a charting of the conditions that have historically placed her identity under erasure” (xx; original emphasis). Writing is a medium to explore, come to terms with, and refashion modes of intersubjectivity and subject-formation, thus giving rise to what O’Reilly calls “alternative modernities” in postcolonial fiction (17). Literature’s focus on the human, its shifts and its deceptions, contrasts with most academic disciplines for it “seeks to demonstrate that truth is a variable and contextual phenomenon produced by the convergence of institutional power, ideologies, and influence. The literary surrenders its ability to produce truth while also gaining the advantage of flexibility or critique”

¹⁶ For more information about the ILF see: <https://www.indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au/patrons-and-ambassadors.html> (accessed 14 Nov. 2015).

¹⁷ Although one should bear in mind that such remarks coming from Aboriginal critics reflect the frustration of watching the dominant culture select a few texts as representative of a diverse community, and thus retaining control of definitions and canon-building.

(Mitchell, 2002 16). This conditional relativism is important to keep in mind when approaching literary texts from the perspective of history, psychology, or anthropology.

Thesis Overview and Methodology

In order to examine intersubjectivity and relationality in contemporary Indigenous women's writing, each chapter of this thesis is focused on a broad theme and analyses primary texts by both Australian Aboriginal and Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori authors. The four central chapters are ordered by topic: firstly a hard-hitting discussion of violence laying the foundations of the obstacles to Indigenous women's freedom and self-determination; next an exploration of what it means to care for others who are cognitively different in Indigenous contexts in order to highlight the potential for solidarity; then a study of the role of language in the construction of the Indigenous self/other and self/community dichotomies; and finally an analysis of intergenerational trauma and memory to examine the dynamics of Indigenous healing and survival. Despite this thematic organisation, it should be noted that the topics transcend each chapter: violence underpins the entire thesis as a constant threat, care is present in most relationships in some form, language is of course pivotal as the prominent mode of human communication, and memory is similarly indispensable to subject-formation and community-building.

Chapter 1 examines instances of colonial oppression and links them with manifestations of violence on institutional, familial, epistemic, and literary levels in Aboriginal authors Melissa Lucashenko and Tara June Winch's debut novels *Steam Pigs* (1997) and *Swallow the Air* (2006). Both address the cycle of violence and the archetypal motif of return in order to bring to light the experience of urban Aboriginal women whose ancestral land has been lost and whose home is the westernised, modern Australian city. Māori short story writer Alice Tawhai's collections *Festival of Miracles* (2005), *Luminous* (2007), and *Dark Jelly* (2011), on the other hand, deny the characters and reader closure, and establish an atmosphere

characterised by a lack of hope and the absence of either political or personal will to effect change.

Chapter 2 explores caring relationships between characters displaying symptoms that may be ascribed to various forms of intellectual and mental disability, and the relatives who look after them. I situate the texts within a postcolonial disability framework and address the figure of the informal carer in relation to her “caree.” Patricia Grace’s short story “Eben,” from her collection *Small Holes in the Silence* (2006), tells the life of a man with physical and intellectual disability (the eponymous Eben) and his relationship with his adoptive mother Pani. The main character of Lisa Cherrington’s novel *The People-Faces* (2004) is a young Māori woman called Nikki whose brother Joshua is in and out of psychiatric facilities. Finally, the protagonists of Vivienne Cleven’s novel *Her Sister’s Eye* (2002) display a wide range of congenital and acquired cognitive impairments, allowing the author to explore how the compounded trauma of racism and sexism participates in (and is influenced by) mental disability.

Chapter 3 examines the materiality and corporeality of language to reveal its role in the formation of (inter)subjectivity. I argue that the use of language in Aboriginal and Māori women’s writing is anchored in the racialised, sexualised bodies of Indigenous women, as well as the locale of their ancestral land. The relationship between language, body, and country in Keri Hulme’s *the bone people* (1984) and Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* (2006) are analysed in relation to orality, gesture, and mapping in order to reveal their role in the formation of Indigenous selfhood and community.

Chapter 4 explores how the reflexive practice of life-writing (including fictional auto/biography) participates in the decolonisation of the Indigenous self and collective identity, as well as the processes of individual survival and cultural survivance, through the selective remembering and forgetting of traumatic histories. Sally Morgan’s Aboriginal life-writing narrative *My Place* (1987), Terri Janke’s Torres Strait Islander novel *Butterfly Song* (2005), as well as Paula Morris and Kelly Ana Morey’s Māori texts *Rangatira* (2011) and *Bloom* (2003) address these issues in various forms. Through the interactions between memory and memoirs, I aim to

bring to light the literary processes of decolonisation of the writing/written self in the settler countries of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The mistrust of western academic research among Indigenous communities is often derived from the perception that “research has been a process that exploits indigenous peoples, their culture, their knowledge and their resources” (Tuhiwai Smith xi). To counter this (often true) stereotype, Tuhiwai Smith recommends that research must be ethical and respectful, reflexive, critical, and humble, and reminds us that “research exist within a system of power” (140, 226). Humility, accountability, and ethics are among the guiding threads I aim to follow in this thesis. It is crucial to establish ground rules for conducting responsible and respectful research on Indigenous material. These include paying close attention to socio-political contexts, and especially to the position of Indigenous minorities in white settler/invader societies.

As readers, we tend to interpret literature according to our own ontological framework, but can we ever understand the local culture enough to interpret responsibly Indigenous texts? Chadwick Allen and Alice Te Punga Somerville argue that “the outsider status, once identified, could enable rather than disable [...] analyses” (14). As a white researcher, I therefore wish to make clear from which point of view I stand, and to acknowledge the discrepancy between the background of the writers, their immediate readership, and their international audience. In this thesis I have chosen not to italicise Indigenous words but I have translated them the first time they are encountered in an attempt to maintain the integrity of the Indigenous-inflected englishes used by the authors themselves, and I have provided a glossary in the appendix.¹⁸ Similarly, I have decided to avoid using the adverb “[sic]” following quotes from works of fiction that are deliberately written in non-standard English. The methodology used in this thesis consists of a combination of close reading informed by historical, social, and cultural factors, as well as postcolonial, feminist, psychoanalytical, disability, and trauma theory. This eclectic choice reflects the variety of issues and techniques present in the primary sources, themselves belonging to several genres, periods, and ethno-cultural backgrounds.

¹⁸ See Appendix 1. Glossary of reo Māori terms.

Academic research has its roots in western universities, and therefore most established methodologies, consciously or not, tend to reproduce patterns of privilege and prejudice. Rigney proposes the solution to this problem as “[m]ethodological intersubjectivity – the need to get beyond self-hegemonic privilege to examine realities from a multitude of differing points of view” (1999 40-1). This is what I aim to do in this thesis through a sustained engagement with various theoretical fields of enquiry that do not commonly enter scholarly dialogue together. As Tuhiwai Smith points out, decolonizing methodologies means “centring our [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (41). She adds that research should be “culturally safe” as well as culturally sensitive in order to shift perceptions of researchers within Indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith 186). Through cautious and reflexive scholarship, I aim at being culturally safe in my attitude and centring Indigenous views in my actions.

As a non-Indigenous researcher, I acknowledge that my work cannot be fully Indigenous research, but hope to fulfil those of Tuhiwai Smith’s conditions that are available to me, including producing research that “takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, the importance of Māori language and culture” (187). She summarises her recommendations for research on Indigenous materials as “Getting the Story Right, Telling the Story Well” (Tuhiwai Smith 218). I have aspired to do both here, carrying out my responsibilities towards the university for the fulfilment of my PhD but also paying my respects to the Indigenous authors and scholars without whose work this thesis would not exist.

Chapter 1.

Reading Violence, Writing Home, Unsettling Embodiments

“These books make you angry.
They tell how we suffer for the crime of being born female.” (Bart 11)

Opening the body of this thesis with a reflection on violence is a decision I made early on in my research. When I read the primary texts for the first time the pervasiveness of violence was striking, in both senses of the word in that it was obvious and that it felt like a blow, as if violence could escape the text and reach me, the reader, across time and space. I was not prepared for the extent to which violence impacts the lives of its victims, witnesses, and perpetrators. Unfortunately, reading Indigenous women’s writing means encountering violence in various forms, which raises the difficult question of whether to be an Indigenous woman in a settler country means automatically to be subjected to violence. From Canada’s missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls to Native American women, twice as likely to be victims of rape and sexual assault as any other racial group, the statistics seem to go in this direction.¹⁹ Through an analysis of violence in Australian Aboriginal and Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori women’s writing, I intend to bring to light the literary expressions of this social tragedy and its impact on intersubjectivity, for as Janet Wilson puts it, “one must read texts not just as ‘literary’ icons but as sites of social representations and historical struggle” (271). Therefore Melissa Lucashenko’s *Steam Pigs*, Tara June Winch’s *Swallow the Air*, as well as Alice Tawhai’s *Festival of Miracles*, *Luminous*, and *Dark Jelly* must be read as sites of socio-political commentary as well as creative writing.

For researchers to work on an issue laden with the potential for affective reaction entails dealing with our own personal trauma to protect ourselves first and foremost, all the while decentring our experiences in order to approach the author’s perspective responsibly. This enterprise may appear destined to fail, since our reactions to texts are always influenced by our own experiences, and indeed for some scholars “[a]lthough statistics-based studies purport to offer a dispassionate

¹⁹ See report “The Facts of Violence Against American India/Alaskan Native Women” published by the charity Futures Without Violence:
<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Violence%20Against%20AI%20AN%20Women%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf> (accessed 16 Nov. 2015).

discussion of conflict and abuse, it is difficult, if not impossible to avoid emotive responses to violence” (Matthews and Goodman 2). Pretending otherwise would be self-deluded and non-conducive to responsible research. Like the contributors to Graham Matthews and Sam Goodman’s edited collection *Violence and the Limits of Representation*, I too reject “the notion that a neutral or objective perspective on conflict and violence is possible,” on the grounds that acknowledging one’s subject position is paramount to the ethical approach such a sensitive subject matter requires (3).

In literature, as in the other arts and humanities disciplines, researchers are not issued with handbooks on how to deal with difficult material, nor are we trained in working with people’s life experiences; there are no debrief sessions, and yet the emotional charge of fiction can rival that of testimonies and interviews in the social sciences. For Dennis Walder, “[r]ecovering the memories of those subject to imperial and colonial processes means inevitably facing trauma as well as celebration,” and researching texts that address colonisation always carries the potential of violence (2011 18). This is why it is crucial for me as a white feminist academic to be aware of my own emotional involvement:

Feminist modes of demystification must include the critical act itself, the scholars [must] write into their texts the problem of who speaks, the positioning of their own subjectivity between academic privilege and the violent, embodied reality of rape. This often means writing against the fear and pain that surround the topic; it also means acknowledging the anger. (Higgins and Silver 7).

My own anger and frustration at witnessing pain in the texts and being helpless to either prevent or at least alleviate it is real, and I acknowledge it here in order to go beyond a knee-jerk egocentric and ethnocentric reading.

There is no unified definition of violence and no consensus on what it actually is. Legal systems all over the world vary in their understanding of violence, and so do police and prison systems, educational institutions, and individuals. Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim point out that violence can be either viewed as product or as a process, with violence as product being an isolated incident or set of incidents, while as a process it is “cumulative and boundless. It always spills over. It creates

and recreates new norms of collective self-understanding. Violence as process is often not recorded because it is internalized; it becomes part of the expectation of the living” (12). This is an essential truth of violence: it seeks to normalise its presence by becoming familiar, yet creates fear and unease in the domestic space and the body of the victim, making both home and body unhomely. Spilling over from the abuser to the victim and the witness, from all three to the community, from society to its underprivileged, and from the text to the reader, violence is movement and destruction while home is supposed to represent permanence and safety, and this is the paradox I propose to analyse in this chapter.

The limitations of using western theories of violence in Indigenous contexts appear vividly when faced with pronouncements such as Lawrence and Karim’s that “[v]iolence marks the new millennium; it registers as *the* sign of post-Cold War fever” (3; original emphasis). Elsewhere in the world violence marks the colonial era and its attending genocides, while the Cold War is seen as the justification for fear-mongering and neo-imperial practices, like the US nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean and the establishment of military bases all over the planet for example. As far as postcolonial criticism is concerned, most work on violence has been done on decades-old independence movements that silence Indigenous voices still under colonial rule in the 21st century. Beside the massacres that wiped out entire tribes, the cultural violence imposed on Indigenous populations by western institutions such as schools and churches must be treated as part of the same colonising machine. Indeed Johan Galtung’s definition of cultural violence also includes “to be desocialized away from own [sic] culture and to be resocialized into another culture – like the prohibition and imposition of languages” as a form of violence (293).

Each year on Australia Day (26 January), Aboriginal people and allies “celebrate” what they refer to as Invasion Day, Survival Day, or the Day of Mourning. This tradition started on the 26th of January 1988 to mark the bicentennial of Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet’s arrival at Botany Bay, with thousands of Aboriginal people from all over Australia marching to Sydney to celebrate surviving 200 years of invasion (Goodall 358-9). Deborah Bird Rose suggests that “[p]ublic declarations of indigenous survival challenge the most fundamental legitimacy of the

nation by demonstrating that it makes war against its own citizens, that violence continues to be foundational, and that indigenous people are the continuing targets of white aggression” (1999 15). Bringing to light white violence through assertions of survival, Indigenous writers have the power to unsettle the settler nation by simply being alive and writing their story. Whereas in Aotearoa official history records settler-Indigenous conflicts for the control of the land known as the New Zealand Wars, Australia is often resistant to calling massacres of Aboriginal people frontiers wars.

Across cultures and historical periods, not only definitions of violence but also what is considered accepted violence changes dramatically. While in the 19th century retaliatory expeditions setting off into the outback to murder Aboriginal tribes for stealing cattle were sanctioned by the colonial authorities, contemporary anti-colonial actions are likely to raise opposition from public opinion and the authorities if they are perceived as anything but peaceful. Racism obviously plays a part in such differing reactions to what is perceived as violent behaviour, but it is necessary to bear in mind that violence remains a controversial issue to examine, partly because our perception of it (as individuals and as a society) is inflected by our race, religion, socio-political affiliations, and historical era.

Thus we must read early theorists of decolonisation such as Frantz Fanon in their context. In pre-independence Algeria, Fanon writes that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” because colonialism is “violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence” (1967 27, 48). Colonialism is pure violence in that it aims to destroy the Other’s body, spirituality, cultural practices, way of life, and subjectivity. Colonial ideology, which hinges on the concept that the colonised needs to be ruled by the coloniser, has created what SORCHA GUNNE and ZOE BRIGLEY THOMPSON call “a complex relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, as the colonized is stripped of agency and subjectivity under imperial rule. Therefore, the process of decolonization involves the colonized (who are categorized as weak, inferior and effeminate) redefining themselves and the social order in an attempt to gain subjectivity” (6). Through physically violent means such as revolution, as well as no less ideologically violent means such as writing, the

colonised reclaim a right to self-determination and self-representation for the right to rebuild individual and communal selves and homes on their own terms.

I argue that what Fanon calls “that atmosphere of violence, that violence which is just under the skin” of the native body and nation is present in Indigenous women’s writing, as the violence inflicted upon their forbears’ skins is lodged in their bodies and has been passed down to their descendants (1967 55). Nationalism is a disputed ideology, but for Elleke Boehmer postcolonial criticism of nationalism must take into account “the liberatory potential of self-defining and/or nationalist discourses with respect to women’s lives” since “[t]he nation [...] remains a place from which to resist the multiple ways in which colonialism distorts and disfigures a people’s history” (2005 10). Nationalism that advocates the advancement of an underprivileged people, as opposed to nationalism that defines its people as what the foreigner is not, opens a place of resistance and creation for Indigenous people to rewrite their severed relationship with the land. It is noteworthy that five out of the six novels written by Australian Aboriginal women writers examined in this thesis focus on young urban working-class female protagonists who travel to their ancestors’ land and return to the city with a firmer sense of identity and belonging.²⁰ For Heather Goodall, the issue of “diaspora has not been explored in Australia,” yet in the light of this uncanny coincidence it definitely needs to be, echoing of the motif of return present throughout this thesis (354).

As opposed to apparently indiscriminate colonial violence however, rape and domestic abuse are gendered forms of violence that are usually inflicted by men upon women, and therefore deserve particular attention in female-authored texts.²¹ It has been argued that domestic violence inflicted by a partner or a relative inside the home is often the result of attempts by the abuser at regaining in the private sphere the power and control he feels is escaping him in the public sphere (Heim 31;

²⁰ See Appendix 2. Mapping women’s mobility in Australian Aboriginal novels. All but one novels by Aboriginal authors discussed in this thesis (Wright’s *Carpentaria* is the exception) focus on a young urban Aboriginal female protagonist who travels to her ancestors’ land before returning to the city. In Wright’s novel, Angel Day lives in a remote community in North Queenslad and disappears from the narrative when she moves to Canberra.

²¹ Arguably, genocidal violence is all but indiscriminate, aiming at annihilating a people and a culture, yet it is still a form of mass violence, as opposed to targeted aggression against women and girls.

Plummer 71-2). If patriarchy dictates that a woman's place is in the home, yet the home is where violence dwells, it begs the question of whether and how women can rid their home of violence, or alternatively create new homes free from violence. Traditional academic approaches to violence have been biological, psychological, or sociological, but according to Matthews and Goodman an informed perspective from the arts and humanities is still lacking (2). I hope to participate in filling this gap by linking violence with the concept of home and looking at the domestic sphere, the body as home, and the unhomely effects of violence on subjectivity and relationality.

1.1 The Domestic Sphere: Restrictions

1.1.1 Violence in the Home

Indigenous women's fiction is concerned with the causes and effects of domestic violence by putting on the page what usually takes place behind closed doors. Two significant characteristics of domestic violence in Indigenous women's writing are that it is present in the background of narratives that do not explicitly focus on it, and that it is passed down through generations. Melissa Lucashenko's *Steam Pigs* (1997) and Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air* (2006) in particular present situations of pervasive violence with teenage female protagonists who break the cycle and survive violence without recourse to cultural traditions, eventually realising that their ancestral land is lost and that their home is the city.

Lucashenko's realist novel and Winch's lyrical narrative follow a similar pattern away from violence. Fanon writes that "[a]t the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (1967 74). Violence against native women and children, however, instils fear and destroys the self-respect of the victims. The very fact that we call this form of violence domestic, *id est* of the home, attracts attention to this paradox. For minorities the family home can be a safe place sheltered from the pervasive racism of society, yet domestic

violence corrupts this myth (Crenshaw 1257). According to Del Martin, the family home is not only a refuge from the outside world: “it is a family factory, designed to perpetuate its own values and to produce two or three replicas of itself as the children in the family marry” (255). Violent households reproduce themselves because some child witnesses and/or victims uncritically reproduce the behaviour types they grow up with.

Steam Pigs is the story of Sue Wilson, who hails from North Queensland and lives in Logan City near Brisbane. The scenes of controlled violence at Sue and boyfriend Rog’s weekly karate class, where Rog’s blows are “stopping short as they were trained to do,” are contrasted by his unrestrained violence against Sue when they are at home (Lucashenko 47). Neither character remarks upon this paradoxical situation for it is their everyday reality. Pauline Bart remarks that “it is the unexceptionality of the victimization of women that is the hallmark of feminist theory” (11). Indigenous women draw similar conclusions in the colonial and postcolonial eras, as writing allows them to reclaim control over their bodies and suggest solutions to stop domestic violence with a focus on Indigenous women saving themselves and each other from men, and saving Indigenous men from becoming abusers (Lucashenko 296). This is especially true in contemporary literature, written after the advent of second-wave and anti-rape feminisms, and thus after the politicisation of physical and sexual assault has changed the way we understand violence against women. For example, as Kimberle Crenshaw points out, “battering and rape, once seen as private (family matters) and aberrational (errant sexual aggression), are now largely recognized as part of a broad-scale system of domination that affects women as a class” (1241). The constitution of women as a class, or sisterhood, as opposed to the virgin/whore dichotomy where good women (virgins) are rapeable and bad women (whores) are not, may well be the most revolutionary idea in feminist thought.

Postcolonial theory too has attempted to rewrite definitions of the individual and the group, and especially the way the west constructs its Other. Boehmer suggest that “[t]he Other is body as sign,” that is the west ascribes a meaning to the body of the Other that is quite distinct and independent from how the Other constitutes

herself (1993 271). Postcolonial and feminist critiques aim to oppose the ways in which this externally imposed meaning is inscribed onto non-western and female bodies, and to empower the individual and the group to create their own meaning. The image of the traumatised body that suffers violence is therefore a powerful one to materialise the forced imposition of meaning onto the Other. Boehmer notes that “[t]he silenced, wounded body of the colonized is a pervasive figure in colonial and postcolonial discourses [...]. In the process of postcolonial rewriting the trope of the dumb, oppressed body undergoes significant translation” (1993 268). Indeed, both Sue and May Gibson in *Swallow the Air* are no Lucretia or Philomela, and their Indigenous identity, both racial and social, is strongly linked with their experience of violence and must be studied alongside it.

Child witnesses are deeply impacted by domestic violence. Children in *Steam Pigs* are accustomed to violence from an early age, from Sue’s sister-in-law Maureen renting a slasher movie for her children, to Sue’s own childhood memories of her father screaming and throwing her brother Dave against a wall (Lucashenko 36, 227). In *Swallow the Air*, May and her brother Billy, who live with their Aunty after their mother’s suicide, witness her being victimised by her partner: “*Aunty got a boyfriend. Skin just like mine. I’d hear Aunty cry all the time. Fists of black hair. Cheek to the stove*” (Winch 32; original emphasis). The impressionist picture she paints in small lexical touches leaves no doubt as to the implications of violence. Because of her abusive partner Craig, Aunty’s home becomes “[j]ust a place of grog and fists” instead of the refuge she intends for her orphaned nephew and niece (Winch 53). May is forced into the role of the witness, touched by violence even when she is not in the room, awake before Craig and Aunty come home and hearing everything.

The witness can easily become victim if they try to defend the initial victim. When Billy steps in to stop Craig from burning Aunty’s face on the stove, Craig turns around and hits Billy’s chest, where his malformed heart lies:

[Billy] pushed himself off the floor and charged to the fibro wall, kicking his foot through the chalky plasterboard as we looked on disbelieving. “Fuck this place, fuck you all! Fuck this shithole of a house, fuck this

town, and fuck this life. Let's go May, ya comin? Fuck this for a home. I'm not comin back, May. Not ever. Let's go." (Winch 58)

Billy's verbal violence and physical blow against the wall is a direct reaction to the violence against people he has both witnessed and experienced. His rejection of "this shithole of a house" riddled with violence forces him to leave Aunty's place and look for a real home, which he temporarily finds in drugs. Like May, and despite his protestations, he will come back looking for home again at the end of the novel, aware that home for Australian Aboriginal people has to be rebuilt, for it cannot be found fully formed anywhere anymore.

The trauma of witnessing has impacted May's childhood memories and made her block out painful recollections. This phenomenon can be analysed in the light of Betrayal Trauma Theory, which posits that "dissociation is most likely to occur when a trauma is perpetrated by someone with whom the victim has a close relationship" (Freyd 1994; Hulette, Kaehler and Freyd 217). In *Swallow the Air*, May as witness experiences dissociation after her father leaves the family. The betrayal is not manifested by the victimisation of May herself, but of her Aboriginal mother, and the memories are suppressed by her subconscious in order to maintain an emotional bond with her absentee white father. After running away from Aunty's home, on the road to Darwin to find her father, she hitches a ride with truck driver Pete who takes her to a bare knuckles fight where she recognises her father:

There he was, watching the men bleed faces. There he was, Dad. The day I truly faced him, at his side, not the stranger I'd wished for. Or made myself imagine. He was the monster I'd tried to hide. [...] I remembered now, when that anger face became his always face and the world ceased to be real, to be able to be understood, so I had left it behind. I couldn't remember the endings to the memories of him. But here they were laid bare – the bores of him that I had hidden. Exposed for the fluid truth to punch through. (Winch 86)

Their reunion, although she remains unseen by him, reopens old wounds and unlocks her memory to reveal the repressed truth of violence that the child May could not understand and had therefore "left behind." She and the reader now have access to her complete memories along with the previously expunged acts of violence. For May, witnessing is a solitary act however: "[w]e don't huddle together, Billy and me – we are separated by violence" (Winch 87). Brother and sister are "separated by

violence” rather than brought together by it, as Winch expresses the power of violence to break down even the closest bonds.

Once May has retrieved her memories and re-threaded the yarn of her past, she can finally start to heal: “And now, I could let him go. Because only when I remembered, could I finally forget” (Winch 89). May’s survival entails acknowledging her father’s violence in order to be able to break the cycle. The effect of domestic violence on the community and on society at large is an under-investigated area of research because of a disproportionate legal and psychological focus on the individual (victim and perpetrator), occluding the responsibility of a deeply patriarchal society. Crenshaw argues in the African-American context that “the violence that accompanies this [male] will to control is devastating, not only for the Black women who are victimized, but also for the entire Black community” (1255). The collective responsibility of the settler society imposing their culture and religion on the Indigenous people of the land, as well as the collective victimhood of the Aboriginal community if even one Aboriginal woman is victimised, must be given consideration when looking at rape and sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities.

As a witness, May can only interpret her mother’s experience of domestic violence from inside her mother’s home but outside her mother’s body:

My mother was a beaten person. She wouldn’t scream at his fist, she wasn’t the type to fight his torments. She bottled all the years too; until one day all those silent screams and tears came at once. And with such force that they took her away. The screams must have been so deafening, the rivers of tears so overflowing that the current could only steal her. The flood breaking so high, that she had to leave us behind. (Winch 88)

After her father leaves the house, the repressed expression of the mother’s suffering breaks down the dams of her mind and takes her away through suicide. The impact of victimisation on mental health is exacerbated by the sheer dimensions of the cycle of violence spanning generations. Similarly, Sue dreads to end up “an Eagleby housewife, dodging Roger’s crunching fists and crying into pillows over a life lost to screaming children” (Lucashenko 46). The “Eagleby housewife” is an unfulfilled woman living in a working-class suburb of Logan City who is not in charge of her

own body and her own life. Like the Eagleby man, she has been dealt a losing hand at birth and must compose with it, yet this familiar pattern can be broken; as Sue and May's trajectories prove, it is possible to refuse domestic violence as the norm and home as a place of fear and pain.

Domestic and sexual violence are major issues faced by women through the Pacific area. Raylene Ramsay notes that in Indigenous women's writing "the central trope [...] remains one of colonial violence and dispossession, but this is often similarly set alongside the theme of internal, often sexual violence," while Michelle Keown examines the writings of the Samoan Albert Wendt and remarks that "violence against women is presented as a recurring and normalized social practice. [Male characters are] merely re-enacting what [they have] learned from [their] father" (2012 1; 2005 26). Violence is linked with colonialism and has become a self-perpetuating part of the colonised cultures.

This is also the case in Māori culture and literature, as Otto Heim asserts that in Patricia Grace's writings "[v]ictimhood and violence [...] are results of historical processes of repression and assimilation which have severed the connection between the body of the people and their material world" (82). He presents violence within Māori communities as the result of inherited colonial processes recently challenged by authors interested in its social dimensions rather than individual psychology (Heim 28). A similar move away from sole individual responsibility and towards a better understanding of the social dynamics that make violence, and especially domestic violence, possible must be traced through an intersectional analysis of systemic violence. Moreover, there is an argument to be made for the part played in the pervasiveness of violence in Māori-dominated disadvantaged urban areas by the loosening of community ties and the narrowing of the *whānau*, or extended family, where a large group of relatives are bound together by duties and obligations, to the western model of the nuclear family.²² In the traditional Māori social model, the privacy often central to domestic violence is non-existent, and the secrecy

²² Alan Duff is particularly concerned with this in *Once Were Warriors*, with Beth Heke attempting to root out violence and child neglect in the Pine Block community with the help of Māori chief Te Tupaea to educate young urban Māori.

surrounding the victim's concealment of bruises or lies about wounds is impossible to sustain.

In Alice Tawhai's three collections of short stories, violence is pervasive and traditional Māori cultural practices are almost entirely absent. Despite Heim's statement that "[t]he amplification of Maori violence in the modern world rather appears as concomitant of the marginalisation of the creative and productive strands of Maori culture," Tawhai and other successful Māori writers, filmmakers, actors, and musicians prove that Māori cultural and artistic production is actually thriving (Heim 122).²³ Tawhai's concern with violence has not waned since *Festival of Miracles*, and after *Luminous* was shortlisted for the New Zealand Book Awards 2008, she went on to write her most violent collection to date, *Dark Jelly*, in 2011. Since the three books came out within six years, I will analyse the stories alongside each other, irrespectively of which collection they appear in.

Tawhai is especially concerned with the extreme anguish caused by the intrusion of violence into the home and onto the body. The most striking case of domestic violence in her writing is to be found in "As it is in Heaven." The protagonist is referred to as Victoria, the pseudonym she uses to write romance novels in secret, instead of her real name Bella. When her husband beats her, Victoria leaves the house to see a doctor and returns "with dread in her throat," standing around "nervously," "her heart [...] sunk," and with "sweat in the pits of her arms," displaying bodily expressions of constant fear (Tawhai, 2011 168, 169). She exemplifies the extreme physical and emotional toll caused by domestic violence, the sustained threat of which is always present wherever the victim seeks shelter, and causes deep trauma (Plummer 71). Victoria can never relax, even when she is at home on her own:

If she heard a car, her heart sped up like a cat running after a mouse, [...] she tried to arrange her body casually, relaxing her face and breathing as if she was asleep [...] But she also had to be alert, to be ready, in case he wanted to wake her and make a scene, and she needed to protect her head. (Tawhai, 2011 171)

²³ Artists such as Taika Waititi, Jemaine Clement, and Keisha Castle-Hughes for example have a successful international career.

Every single aspect of her life and her body is controlled by the spectre of the man, even in his absence, for “[n]o matter what happened, her body was jumpy all the time, waiting for the worst. [...] every moment was spent waiting” for her husband’s violence (Tawhai, 2011 172). The emotional and nervous damage done to Victoria is irreparable: “[h]er landscape was emotionally and physically blasted. Nothing bloomed” (Tawhai, 2011 172). Utterly destroyed by violence, her heart is barren.

Like Victoria’s body, her house reflects the daily occurrence of violence in a language reminiscent of televised police dramas picturing the home as a crime scene where “the blood spatters on the wallpaper had dried into stains. Sheets with fresher blood on them lay on the floor in the laundry” (Tawhai, 2011 168). Her husband is jealous and hyper-controlling to the point that he sometimes eats all the food in the house so Victoria cannot send her daughter Daisy to school, and in the evening he asks Daisy what Victoria did during the day. His hyper-controlling behaviour forces Victoria to keep a “spy” in her home to record her every move. The extremity of the husband’s violence is also exemplified by her confinement to the bedroom within the house when he is absent, because “[s]he didn’t want him to come home and find her elsewhere in the house. In the past, she had been punched for standing too close to the windows” (Tawhai, 2011 169). The physical and behavioural impact of domestic violence leads to disembodiment as well as unhomeliness, as Victoria can remember her face before she lost several teeth and ended up with a large scar covering half of the face that is not hers anymore, made alien by violence.

1.1.2 Violence of the Home(land)

If domestic violence is violence in the home and domestic terrorists are citizens turning against their country, then the violence of the homeland can be productively assessed side by side with spousal and parental abuse. The settler nation as homeland exerts constant violence on Indigenous people, its other within, through systemic discrimination and cultural oppression. As Susan Stanford Friedman notes, “[t]he nation too is home – [...] the nation is family” (193). Home and homeland are

sites of violence against the female, Indigenous body that echo each other in the texts, and the nation is the collective body that turns against itself.

The very concept of nation is fraught from the start in settler countries, where one system destroys and replaces another, thus complicating the idea of an Indigenous homeland. To Homi Bhabha's remark that migrants and refugees are "the 'unhomely' inhabitants of the contemporary world," I would add that Indigenous people's situated presence is even more unhomely, for their survival reminds the settler state of its double displacement: of the Indigenous homeland and from the imperial motherland (1994b, 271; Turner 22). For Friedman, location creates foreignness because "[t]hose who feel at home in the world need strangers to remind them of who they are not" (199). Being at home in the nation is a mark of belonging, another complex issue for Indigenous people, displaced on their own land.²⁴ Structural violence inflicted by the state is justified by a desire to force all its inhabitants to comply with the rules supported by the majority. The refusal to abide by them is used as a justification for sanctions and increased violence in the form of imprisonment, but also racial and cultural discrimination.

Heim defines systemic violence as "the violence of a particular cultural and economic mode of production, as well as the violence that results, in the form of terrorism and sabotage, from the confrontation between that system and another culture of production" (125). Settler countries are indeed sites of systemic violence between the Indigenous and settler/invader cultures. Galtung, on the other hand, defines cultural violence as "aspects of culture [...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (291). Both forms of violence, politico-economic and cultural, are insidious and lead to physical violence. Indeed, "a major form of cultural violence indulged in by ruling elites is to blame the victim of structural violence who throws the first stone, [...] stamping him as 'aggressor'" (Galtung 295). This is the technique used in *Steam Pigs* by the Townsville cops who provoke an Aboriginal black man until he swears "ya can't fucken arrest me" and they get what they wanted: "'Indecent language in a public place,' said the cop,

²⁴ See Sheila Collingwood-Whittick's edited collection *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature* published by Rodopi in 2007.

smiling triumphantly” as he arrests him (Lucashenko 181). In this scene the police officers reassert white dominance over black lives, adding a layer of rhetorical and cognitive violence to the physical violence of handcuffing and manoeuvring the man into the police car.

This bringing to light of violence is not only present in contemporary writing, as Rachel Weaver’s study of 19th century Australian fiction shows to “challenge current-day understandings of white Australia’s history of silence and forgetting, and expose a habitual drive to bring colonial violence to visibility” (35). Openness about colonial violence against Aboriginal people was limited to early fiction written in a social and political climate that encouraged the genocide of Indigenous populations, for instance with states issuing licences to kill Aboriginal people, constitutionally legal since they were categorised as fauna and flora until the 1967 referendum.²⁵ As the frontier advanced and policies shifted from extermination to assimilation, mass killings became less acceptable to the Australian psyche, so they also disappeared from fiction and dropped from memory. Contemporary Aboriginal writing that addresses colonial violence engages with this collective amnesia, and ultimately those earlier representations, to confront white perceptions of the past (Turner 30).

The modern city offers a propitious setting for various forms of structural violence. Despite pervasive institutional violence manifested by high imprisonment rates and deaths in custody, the city is also a place of mobility and anonymity for Indigenous people. The tension between movement and settlement in urban areas reflects the paradox faced by Aboriginal people living in Australian cities. The name of Wollongong, or the Gong, in *Swallow the Air* for instance, and the short story about Brisbane’s Aboriginal past embedded in *Steam Pigs*, hint at a palimpsestic native presence in Australian cities, for the latter stand on Aboriginal ground and the Indigenous land remains present, if concealed, just below the surface.

In the introduction to *Unsettling Cities: Movement/Settlement*, John Allen, Doreen Massey and Michael Pryke point out that “cities are the points of intersection, where the flows of money, information, ideas and communications meet

²⁵ On the 1967 referendum see: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx> (accessed 16 Sept. 2015).

up, often to produce something entirely new in form and fashion” (2). An example of this phenomenon is the new urban Aboriginal mob that May meets in Redfern: “We’re all family here, all blacks, from different places, but we’re all one mob, this place here...” (Winch 99).²⁶ The new urban nation is made up of displaced and discultured people who find kinship and a sense of belonging among others as deprived as they are. Their urban homeland is a violent place, as May remarks: “[g]rowing up in the bloody Gong was nothing compared to a year living in the Block. I went in like a buttery cake and came out like a shotgun or a Monaro or a gaol sentence. Came out like a steel wall adorned in black tar” (Winch 100). Place moulds identity, and living in Redfern gives May a new resistance to, and surprising appreciation of, physical violence:

[w]hen you start to not feel the punch that lands on her face, when you begin to see someone’s broken heart instead of someone’s bruised veins, when you know that cuz needs a beating to sort him out, you begin to see love more than hate, that real sort of love, the sort that’s desperate and always fighting. Fighting to be heard and stay. (Winch 102)

This type of violent love may be a corrupted version of traditional kinship that eschews the sparing of pain, but it is also a way to communicate and to create deep bonds between people in what is depicted as an otherwise cold-hearted and individualistic society.

Despite its potential for mobility, the city can also be a prison. When May leaves Redfern she asks her friend Johnny to come with her, but just as she refused to leave Wollongong with Billy, Johnny refuses to leave with her: “You don’t get it, you don’t get that we stuck here! [...] that we fucking prisoners of our own prison. [...] We don’t go nowhere” (Winch 132). May is unable to understand his resistance, as she has moved several times by this point in the text, and accuses him: “you just gunna stay nobody. You ain’t gunna move to change anything, not for nobody else and not even for yourself. Ever thought about it? Johnny Smith – John Smith, that’s a nobody’s name, you’re a fuckin nobody like everybody else!” (Winch 132). Wherever May settles becomes constitutive of her identity until she moves

²⁶ Redfern is a suburb of Sydney with a majority of Aboriginal inhabitants. It is famous as the site of then-PM Paul Keating’s 1992 Redfern Speech acknowledging European responsibility for the current issues faced by the Indigenous populations in Australia.

somewhere else, whereas being “stuck” in one place like Johnny means to lose control over his identity by letting himself being shaped by place, and therefore be “a nobody”.

May and Sue’s travels exemplify the city’s dual role as a place of freedom and constraint allowing women anonymity and independence (McDowell 106). Although both girls are told by men to “stay in their place,” they are entreated by other women – Issy and Joyce for May and Kerry and Rachel for Sue – to move away and find themselves. When Sue talks about Logan City with Brisbanites at a women’s workshop, she begins to reflect on her own relationship with the place: “yes, there was a lot of unemployment. And domestic violence (Sue supposed innocently to her new acquaintance). No, that’s not why she does karate, that’s just to keep fit (isn’t it?)” (Lucashenko 134). She starts to question how her own behaviour and daily activities are shaped by where she lives, and realises that she is not so different from the Aboriginal woman she meets in Townsville who walks an extra block home to avoid the street where a racist man has trained his dogs to attack black people. Fanon’s analysis of the construction of place, and especially the native town, in the colonies illuminates the imaginary construction of place like Logan City in the white middle-class Australian psyche:

It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other, The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of lights, The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty arabs. (Fanon, 1967 30)

This is where urban violence meets linguistic violence through the labels attached to places and by extension the people who live there. Like Fanon’s “native town,” Logan City has a bad reputation among Brisbane liberals, and despite looking like a suburb of a large urban conurbation on the map, for Sue and those who live there it is a closed unit clearly separate from Brisbane. Another aspect of urban violence is to convince the underprivileged that their moves are restricted because of where they live.

Institutional violence is also suggested by the absence of recourse to the police or social workers by Aboriginal women victim of violence. Crenshaw studies

this phenomenon as part of a wider system that fails to provide necessary services for women of colour. She writes that shelters serving minorities fail if they only address the violence inflicted by the abuser for “they must also confront the other multilayered and routinized forms of domination that often converge in these women’s lives, hindering their ability to create alternatives to the abusive relationships that brought them to shelters in the first place” (Crenshaw 1245). Sue’s refusal to go to the police and May’s move to a squat after her assault show a lack of trust in those same institutions that are underused by Aboriginal women.

Racist violence need not be manifested solely by the physical assault of whites on blacks, a distinction that many white people have some difficulty grasping. Sue reads a (fictional) short story by an Aboriginal author recommended by her new flatmate Melinda that reads: “A youngish man is offended at my suggestions of his violence, despite my calm and reasonableness. He’s never fought a black man. He’s not to blame for this, for that. He is totally irresponsible” (Lucashenko 224). The word “irresponsible” has arguably a different meaning from “not responsible,” since in common parlance irresponsible describes someone whose behaviour is risky and inconsiderate, and who might cause harm to themselves and those around them. White violence indeed takes many covert forms.

In Sue’s experience of poor Aboriginal suburbs, “[t]he world was – is – simple. You won or you lost, you punched or you bled. No-one was left to shrivel wordless in a room full of stiff speaking in tongues” (Lucashenko 8). She opposes two different forms of violence, one direct and one indirect, one honest and one dishonest, but both resulting in the pain of the victims. At the heart of interracial violence is a power imbalance due to white supremacy in Australia. Institutional violence in particular is manifested through the difficulty of claiming for and obtaining benefits, for example, as Sue puts it: “[a]ll fights are decided before they begin, but some deny you what you need to lose with human dignity” (Lucashenko 8). The fights that dehumanise the loser are those waged against white institutions where Aboriginal people cannot even throw a punch and have already lost. If “[v]iolence is needs-deprivation,” then depriving people of their dignity also qualifies as violence (Galtung 295). Violence leads to and is manifested by needs-

deprivation, and both are heightened by the concentration of populations of diverse socio-economic status in urban areas.

The phenomenon of systemic violence tends to be underestimated because of its lack of visibility for the members of the privileged group who have the power to effect change. A bruised cheek is visible, generations of crushed self-esteem are not. Galtung calls our attention to history textbooks and other official documents with misleading vocabulary, for example using “‘discrimination’ for massive structural violence and ‘prejudice’ for massive cultural violence. Sanitation of language: itself cultural violence” (295). Subtle forms of violence are not easily recognisable, yet it is necessary to pay attention to them in order to educate people in social justice. At the receiving end of multifarious violence, Sue’s consciousness expands as the story unfolds and she becomes better informed:

A young white kid explains how they hit you behind phone books so the marks don’t show. A girl Rache knows is a cop, and tells me about the rapist working at one of the local copshops, and how he’s taken to raping young constables now. I hear on the grapevine about the Murri kid dragged to the bush and a shotgun put between his legs. (Lucashenko 244)

Only when Sue rids her life of personal violence can she see where her story fits in the wider frame of historical violence and colonial oppression. As she sums up, aware at last of the intersections of race, class, and criminalisation: “life – well, it’s a fucken blackclass, poorclass, jailclass art form, innit? Unreal, eh” (Lucashenko 245). Her newly awakened political consciousness is expressed through facts and slogan-style rhetoric, as opposed to the arguments from experience she uses at the beginning of the novel to justify men’s violence against women.

In *Swallow the Air*, the protagonist’s consciousness of the injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal people is expressed through references to Stolen Children and May’s mother’s childhood memories of being the only child allowed to remain with her mother in 1967. This is a common story in her neighbourhood, where women “were messed up, climbing those walls, trying to forget. It wasn’t a good time for the women, losing their children” (Winch 23). The children were not lost as much as

stolen and hidden out of reach of their mothers, until they eventually forgot who they were and where they came from.

In her family's homeland of Euabalong, New South Wales, May meets an elder who explains that "when that bad spirit happens to family, it stays in the family, when we born we got all our past people's pain too. It doesn't just go away like they think it does" (Winch 170). Aboriginal people today carry the burden of intergenerational trauma passed down from their ancestors, and each act of oppression or micro-aggression reopens historical wounds. In the chapter aptly titled "Country," May meets her relative Percy Gibson who happens to be the "spitting image of Mum. All skin and hard face" (Winch 178). There is some reassurance in the familiar face, but as May's mother was a battered woman in constant pain, the reader is in little doubt that May will not find what she is looking for. Indeed, Percy mocks her enterprise: "[s]tories, ha! What do you want to know? Where ya get ya skin from, ya tribal name, ya totem, ya start chart, the meaning of the world?" (Winch 180). He later explains his outburst:

The thing is, we weren't allowed to be what you're looking for, and we weren't told what was right, we weren't taught by anyone. There is a big missing hole between this place and the place you're looking for. That place, that people, that something you're looking for. It's gone. It was taken away. We weren't told, love; *we weren't allowed to be Aboriginal*. (Winch 181-2; original emphasis)

For the Gibsons and other Aboriginal families forcefully divorced from their culture and banned from being who they are, the only solution is to reconstruct contemporary versions of Aboriginality. May acknowledges: "I wanted to be free of them – I wanted pride," where freedom and pride come in the form of breaking the cycle of violence and asserting survival (Winch 181). After this anticlimactic reunion with her relatives, she leaves their house without looking back, subverting the traditional motif of the return to the land as spiritual sustenance.²⁷

1.2 *The Body as Home: Intrusions*

²⁷ This is in contrast with the discussion in Chapter 4 of Sally Morgan's *My Place*, where Sally and Gladys's trip to meet Daisy's relatives in Marble Bar gives them "a sense of place" (230).

1.2.1 Rape as Home Invasion

Having examined the effects of violence in the home and violence of the home/nation, we now turn to the body as home, in other words the home we take along with us when we leave home, the home of the heart, mind, and soul (Friedman 191, 205). The debate among feminist critics on whether rape is a sexual act or an act of power has given rise to a discussion of the relationship between sex and patriarchal power (Bart 13; MacKinnon 287; Plummer 68). Physical and sexual violence threaten the integrity of the body-as-home and rape particularly, defined as forced penetration into someone's body orifices, is therefore an extreme form of home invasion. If sexuality and violence are "indigenous archetypes," then we must look at literary representations of sexual violence in order to explore the body as a site of (un)homeliness (Goldie, 1989 15; Keown, 2005 24).

In both *Steam Pigs* and *Swallow the Air*, the protagonist is raped at one point in the narrative: Sue by Rog in their home following a beating, and May by a local boy on a neighbourhood beach. The difference is in the function the rape plays in the narrative: for Sue it is a turning point in her relationship with Rog, and recollection of the event allows her to put an end to violence and move into a home of her own, while May's assault is contained within a single chapter and no other mention is made of it in the rest of the novel, as if negating its consequences. The two events are also temporally different, as disclosure of Sue's rape comes well after the fact, only when she is ready to share this information with her friends Kerry and Rachel and with the reader. After the bruises heal and she starts missing Rog, Sue manages to think the word "rape" for the first time:

The memory of his latest attack was fresh, but as always fading rapidly [...]. All except the rape. That was the clincher, the one thing to cling to when she came back to remind herself that under the broad shoulders and good looks lurked someone she couldn't begin to know, someone with a stranger's eyes that could do that tearing thing to her. (Lucashenko 212)

The trauma of rape by an intimate partner "with a stranger's eyes" is arguably different from the trauma of being raped by a stranger. Indeed marital rape, where

the perpetrator is either the boyfriend, fiancé, or husband of the victim, involves an element of betrayal that reveals a violent side to the person they trust to share dreams of togetherness with, and in many cases a home and a family (MacKinnon 289).

“That tearing thing” is not only an intrusion inside her body but also the end of her plans to marry Rog and have children with him, that is to build a home together. Statistics show that marital rape is widespread and often accompanies spousal abuse, yet for Sue it is unacceptable whereas wife battering is considered normal. She accepts domestic violence at first on the basis of personal experience because she has always known it to be women’s inevitable lot. Rape, however, is one step too far for her. Sue’s sexual behaviour throughout the novel can be described as healthy in the sense that she is physically attracted to Rog and seems to be enjoying a fulfilling sex life. This sexual maturity may explain Sue’s reaction to the rape and subsequent rejection of Rog’s efforts to reconcile, since she views the assault as an unacceptable breach of her body.

Rape for Sue is the ultimate form of disrespect and desecration. When she first assesses the damage of Rog’s last beating in Rachel’s car she cannot acknowledge it yet: “did he have to –? (Push that thought away)” (Lucashenko 199). Considering the extent of her bruises, the horror contained in the dash must be of an even more intimate, penetrative nature. Once Rachel brings her to a safe place where her body can heal, Sue can finally reminisce about the assault and work through what happened. Inside her friends’ house she is able to remember her terror at Rog’s rage: “*ya got a lot to learn bout being a woman I tellya. I’ll show you whose fucken prick belongs –*) Slam the doors down right there on that one” (Lucashenko 201; original emphasis). Once more the dreaded dash replaces the dehumanising act she cannot think about yet. This is also the first time Lucashenko allows the reader an insight into Sue’s beatings, previously only signified by her bruises. This time it is not the aftermath of violence that we witness, but the instant immediately preceding it, putting us in the place of the victim for whom the tension is growing and who knows instinctively what is coming next.

Once inside Kerry and Rachel’s house, “sleep quickly closed in around the girl’s bruised shell, dreams already padding the air that bit her very wounds, her

young body hard at work repairing the damage of ten minutes ten hours ten seconds a lifetime of Roger's flaying on the lounge room floor" (Lucashenko 202). The "ten minutes ten hours ten seconds a lifetime" comment attracts attention to the temporality of violence, for violence and pain distort the perception of time and affect the ability of the victim to remember, which can be re-established by finding a safe home, like Sue who accepts the reality of Rog's forced penetration into her body once she is safe in her friends' home.

May's rape, on the other hand, is described in diegetic time and experienced by the reader through her perception only, as well as contained within a single paragraph. She wanders on the beach after dark and tries to run away from a gang of boys:

The panting of terror drew behind me as my shirt gave way and dumped me over, heavy kneecaps, hands and sand tormenting. We're down, we're stopped, and a blade caresses my cheek like a sympathetic breeze. "This gunna show ya where ya don't belong dumb black bitch." The popping buttons over my back take me elsewhere. Bubble wrap. Lemonade burps as Billy and me push each plastic blister between finger and thumb, choking on each other's laughter. Popping giggles silence violent grunts. He ends it mutely and clips back his buttons: pop ... pop ... pop. (Winch 36)

The focus of the scene is on the detachment of the victim (the popping noise that takes her mind elsewhere to memories of her brother) rather than the physical trauma of the rape. This dissociation is in keeping with the fragmentary structure of the novel focused around significant snapshots of May's life without explicit narrative links, but it could also indicate that rape is not an unusual or unexpected experience for her. The scene may be criticised as an overtly lyrical and unrealistic depiction of the horror of physical violation, yet as Gunne and Thompson argue in relation to Mahasveta Devi's story "Draupadi," also focused on rape: "[b]y speaking from [the victim]'s narrative point of view, her brutalized body is invested with agency even while the violence of the attack is foregrounded" (9). May's body is effectively

concealed by her mind and memories, thus denying the perpetrator narrative agency and the reader voyeuristic omniscience.²⁸

Although the rape is not mentioned anywhere else, May leaves her Aunt's house shortly afterwards and finds herself in a squat, on the road to Darwin, on the streets of Sydney, in Joyce's house in Redfern, on a journey west to Euabalong, and eventually back to Wollongong and Aunt's home. Such mobility reveals a yearning to find her place in the world. Friedman notes that "[l]onging for home is the body's desire – a feeling of homesickness experienced viscerally in the flesh, in the 'affective body.' But homesickness too is a cryptogram; the word opens up into opposites: sick for home and sick of home" (Friedman 191). Sick of Craig's violence in Aunt's house and on Aunt's body, and sick for a home of her own, she must find and leave several houses before coming home at the end of her journey.

In both cases, the rape happens to a teenage female protagonist (Sue is eighteen and May is a little younger) and attracts attention to the role of violence in the formation of identity and intersubjectivity, since as Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver remark, "the danger, the frequency, and the acceptance of sexual violence all contribute to shaping behaviour and identity, in women and men alike" (1-2). It is their identity *as* women, *id est* their gender identity, which is shaped by the experience of violence as victims (Gilmore 164). If sexual assault marks women as women, then we may take it a step further and suggest that rape and rapeability are also central to the construction of gender identity of the social woman, opposing the external construction of the female victim of sexual violence with the internal construction of survivor identity (Higgins and Silver 3; MacKinnon 290).²⁹

The literary representation of sexual violence is a point of contention among literary scholars. For Sabine Sielke, "central aspects of rape – such as physical pain

²⁸ I became aware while revising this chapter to prepare for submission that this scene from *Swallow the Air* does not contain enough information to establish with certainty whether the boy rapes May or masturbates over her. Since the latter is also a form of sexual assault with traumatising consequences for the victim, I decided to keep my first interpretation as it is.

²⁹ I am aware of the debate surrounding the notions accompanying the terms victimhood and survivorship among the academic, medical, and legal communities, but to illustrate my point about the temporal disjunction caused by violence I use victim when referring to the present of the assault, and survivor to designate the character after the assault.

and psychic violation – escape representation, yet [...] rape can be communicated as text only” (4). This does not mean that rape can only be communicated through text, but that it can be a purely textual event, separate from an actual rape. For an author to write a rape scene is more akin to entering a dialogue with existing representations than presenting a faithful account of the act of rape itself (Sielke 6). This literary tradition is always situated socially, culturally, and historically, and the symbolic meaning of the rape is dependent upon the context (Plummer 63). Instead of the individual perpetrator and victim, the story of rape actually reflects the way power is shared between men and women as social roles. This interpretation is useful to remind us of the necessity to maintain the cultural specificity of women’s experience in feminist criticism, yet it risks obliterating reminders of the physical experience of sexual violence on individual victims by placing them within an allegorical narrative (Gunne and Thompson 5).

Intersectionality offers a way to acknowledge difference without losing sight of the individual experience of pain. The term coined by Crenshaw refers to “a way of framing the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color [and] a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (1296). Indeed Sue and May are racially abused while being sexually assaulted, with Rog calling Sue a “*fucken uptight nigger slut*” and the boy on the beach calling May a “dumb black bitch” (Lucashenko 201; Winch 36). Sue becomes particularly aware of the intersections of gender, race, and class when she mentions the notorious Boggo Road Gaol in Dutton Park, Queensland:

A place full of black women and poor black women and addicted women and women who snapped from being bashed one time too many. [...] Try living it from inside those white walls of time. Try being black and still being in jail when you walk out of the gate, born jailed, live jailed, die jailed. (Lucashenko 243-4)

Sue’s consciousness evolves from seeing the abuse of Aboriginal women as normal to embracing the big picture of the racist, capitalist patriarchy for which the worst aberrations are combinations of blackness, womanhood, and poverty, all of which are

part of Sue's identity. Boggo gaol is the microcosm of society and a place of desecration of the body.³⁰

The sexual abuse of Indigenous girls in their homes is a pervasive concern throughout Tawhai's short stories. In "Open Your Mouths," the unnamed narrator listens to his workmate George talking about being sexually abused by an uncle in a traditional Māori extended family, and about his older twin sisters Cairo and Alamein who were their koro's (grandfather) favourites. George is unaware of the significance of his jealousy towards them: "Most times they slept in his bed on the floor in the sitting room with him [...] and they had no undies on – Koro said it made extra washing" (Tawhai, 2005 109-110). The reader's unease at the hint of incest grows as George recounts their koro feeding the twins by hand in a scene disturbingly reminiscent of fellatio (Tawhai, 2005 111).

In the Māori context, "the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is of great significance in a culture that pays particular respect to its elders," and this gives a particular meaning to this form of incest as a corruption of traditional culture where the koro or the kuia, female elder or grandmother, are traditionally the ones who provide their mokopuna, or grandchildren, with a link to their ancestors (Heim 153). Unaware of the cyclical nature of sexual abuse, George also tells the narrator that Cairo had a daughter, Dora, who lives with their koro. Contrary to most of Tawhai's stories, "Open Your Mouths" is set in a traditional Māori setting, but as Heim states "[s]tories of happy rural childhood are no longer very common in Maori fiction. [...] The more recent stories of childhood [...] evoke the existence of parental neglect and the experience of violence and death" (157). The author is aware that a veneer of tradition may hide hypocrisy and abuse. The pervasiveness of sexual abuse of Indigenous women and girls also refers to the fact that their sexuality has been interfered with since the time of colonisation, and that the dynamics of intergenerational trauma have reproduced this situation ever since.

³⁰ Nearly 20 years after the publication of *Steam Pigs*, "Aboriginal women are the fastest growing incarcerated group," and deaths in custody such as that of 22-year-old Ms Dhu (who cannot be named for cultural reasons) in Western Australia in August 2014 remain far too frequent despite the 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: <https://newmatilda.com/2015/11/24/the-more-things-change-female-black-lives-dont-matter-if-they-did-ms-dhu-would-still-be-alive/> (accessed 30 Nov. 2015).

Thus the children George, Cairo, Alamein, and probably Dora, are abused at home, where they should be safe, by older relatives who should be protecting them and nurturing them to become well-adjusted adults by the time they leave the family home to build a home of their own.

Like Lucashenko and Winch, Tawhai's survivors of sexual violence can find support in sisterhood with other Indigenous women. "Men's Business" is the story of housewife Puhi who welcomes her husband Santana home with a teenage girl and her baby in tow, whom he introduces as his niece Ivy and her child Helen. Puhi suspects Ivy of being Santana's lover intruding into Puhi's own home, and whose body represents the home of Santana's illegitimate child. The Aunties, or female elders, tell Puhi to "[k]ick the bitch out onto the road" for Ivy is not welcome in their community (Tawhai, 2011 208). Ivy has internalised victim-blaming coming from men and women alike, and she tells Puhi: "I bet you hate me. I hate me. I'm dog shit [...]. Women don't like me. Even my own mother hates me" (Tawhai, 2011 208-9). She reveals to Puhi that her stepfather, who also beat her mother, sexually abused her:

"I used to be glad when he beat her up, said Ivy, because then he'd come to me, and we'd do the stuff that him and mum did together. And that was my own mother. I did that to my own mother." "That's not your fault," said Puhi. "It's not your fault that your stepfather was like that." "He said it was because I was so sexy, he couldn't help it," said Ivy. "How old were you when it started?" "About five." "Well, five year olds know fuck all. He was a grown up. Even if you were fifteen, and you walked past him in your root patoot, it would have been his job to tell you to put some clothes on." "It's just normal to me," said Ivy. "I don't give a fuck who gets inside me. I'm ratshit anyway." (Tawhai, 2011 210-211)

Puhi takes on the role Ivy's mother failed to fulfil by opening her home to her and teaching the girl that her body belongs to her and that it is not men's to take. Moving in with Puhi, Ivy gains both a home and a mother figure; herself a mother, she is thus allowed to revert to a child state and rewrite her damaging childhood in order to become a mother to, and provide a home for, her own baby daughter.

1.2.2 Return Journeys: Home Reimagined

Since the publication in 1997 of *Bringing them Home*, the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, and even more so in post-Apology Australia (2008-present), what Gillian Whitlock calls “the rhetoric of ‘coming home’” has acquired a central place in Aboriginal writing (2001, 203). Discussion of Indigenous diaspora may seem paradoxical, for Indigeneity is primarily understood as a relation of belonging to a certain location inherited from one’s ancestors, yet the displacement of Indigenous people in settler countries complicates the definition of diaspora. For Friedman, home is a permanently asked question, as “[b]orn of displacement, diasporas spawn the creation of an imaginary homeland, a place of fixed location and identity” (195). It is the physical fact of displacement that creates this yearning for an imagined home and spurs Sue and May to leave their house and find a home. Their journey must be physical, for it is the body that is the primary victim of violence in and of the home, and therefore it is that same body that must undergo the return journey to reimagine home. In this sense, *Steam Pigs* and *Swallow the Air* are indeed diasporic narratives that tell the story of travel to a land unknown to the protagonist where memory and desire produce an idealised image that is confronted by the reality of the homeland (Friedman 200).

Ideas of home and locatedness are crucial to members of Indigenous diasporas displaced on their own land. When Sue and May return to their ancestors’ homeland and go back to the city, their travels are “layered diasporas” (Friedman 196). They look for home but never reach it because it does not exist anymore and there is nowhere to “go back to.” The only way forward is the way out of violence. The form of the novel is well suited to the expression of character development, and its length gives the author time and space to trace her protagonist’s journey, even in *Swallow the Air*’s fragmented form. Character development and social consciousness are central to anti-colonial literature, since as Fanon points out, “it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he [sic] will secure its victory” (1967 33). When the novels begin, both May and Sue

are at a crucial point in their lives and they need to move through time and space to realise their humanity.

In a violent home, the threat is constant because violence can erupt at any time. It is natural for the victim in this case to try and develop strategies to avoid or deflect violence, and therefore take the responsibility for the violence she suffers.³¹ In *Steam Pigs*, the following scene occurs during an assertiveness workshop in Kerry's house:

“But, won't encouraging women to be assertive make their husbands more likely to bash them?” Sue worries. Kerry is patient, explaining the dynamics of violent relationships. “It's a cycle see. He bashes her, and then they make up, it's all like the honeymoon again, and then a few days or weeks down the track the tension starts to build up. Assertiveness means you can break the cycle at a relatively safe point.” (Lucashenko 68)

Kerry's cycle is akin to Crenshaw's “chain of violence” in that it can be broken if a link is severed (1258). The image of the cycle attracts attention to the temporality of violence as a sustained condition. Indeed Lawrence and Karim note that, “[a]t its first eruption, violence is always experienced as unique. If given time and repetition, however, it becomes routine [and] risks becoming normal” (5). This is the case in many violent homes, including Sue's.

The way out of violence for Sue and May is found through the support of fellow broken people who dwell outside of both white institutions and traditional communities, and who open their home to them. Through rewriting cultural traditions such as “going walkabout,” a recent term applied to what was seen in the early 20th century as an Aboriginal tradition involving periods of wandering, subverting the motif of archetypal return, and scenes of anticlimactic family recognition, Lucashenko and Winch allow Sue and May to step out of the circle of violence and find a new home. The fact that both teenagers escape violence is evidenced by the presence in each case of a forward-looking ending, with Sue's suggestion that “a person should write a book” on Australia's unequal society, and May's hope that if “they [...] stop digging up our people, maybe then, we'll all stop

³¹ The overwhelming majority of abused spouses and partners are women, so I use feminine pronouns throughout this discussion.

crying” (Lucashenko 245; Winch 198). Eventually, it is Australian racism that they wish to do away with.

Sue’s way out comes under the guise of her friendship with Kerry, although she is at first “oblivious to the newly-sown seeds of revolution” (Lucashenko 60, 64). Crenshaw underlines the necessity to “recognize the different circumstances under which feminist consciousness develops and manifests itself within minority communities,” and we must therefore acknowledge Sue’s own newly-formed Aboriginal feminist consciousness by the end of the novel, despite her continued adherence to some gender stereotypes (1265; Lucashenko 224). We may wonder however why Sue’s education about the dynamics of abusive relationships must come from a white woman, and whether Lucashenko might be playing into Spivak’s concern about “white men saving brown women from brown men” (297). In fact, Lucashenko’s 2013 novel *Mullumbimby* also focuses on a female Aboriginal protagonist whose closest friends are white lesbians. Like Kerry, they are not complicit with the heterosexual patriarchy responsible for demeaning Aboriginal men and dehumanising Aboriginal women. As Kerry opens up about her own difficult childhood “locked up, and bashed by pig coppers,” the reader becomes aware that, despite her white privilege, she has experienced police violence first-hand and is able to confront Sue with a relatively small power imbalance (Lucashenko 70).

This is not the case with her more privileged partner Rachel, who is rightly more careful around Sue. Kerry and Rachel represent the hardened, self-help advocate arguing with the left-wing, communal responsibility advocate respectively, and an internal conflict present in each of us with an interest in social justice. For example, Kerry tells Sue: “don’t sit in Eagleby on yer black arse whinging about how dumb you are when we both know it’s bullshit. [...] There’s nothing stopping her doing whatever she wants” while Rachel replies: “No, just sexism, racism and the bloody poverty trap!” followed by Kerry’s “Oppression is ten per cent degradation and ninety per cent contemplation – of your own splendid navel” and Rachel’s “that’s nothing more or less than the ones with power making sure the ones without stay ignorant and poor and scared shitless” (Lucashenko 72). The friendship between Sue and Kerry is reciprocal, with Sue challenging her friend on her self-help

philosophy in relation to white politics if she wants to be an ally, while Kerry displays awareness of her subject position as a white woman when she tells Sue: “I mean, I shouldn’t be telling you this stuff, there’s blackfellas to do it better than me” and acknowledges the crucial role of Aboriginal thinkers and African-American feminists (Lucashenko 190, 188).

Kerry believes in the positive impact for former victims of domestic violence to see their ex-attacker when they come back with other women to pick up their belongings (Lucashenko 211). The violent man who attacks his partner when they are alone in the house or with their children does not dare to do anything when she enters the domestic space with other women. It is not home itself that is a threat for women, but the omnipotence of the man who dictates his rules. Once Sue moves to Brisbane on her own, Kerry and Rachel visit her new home: “One bookshelf full of texts – God, that’s the child reading now? On the floor a snarling black ceramic panther that must surely belong to Sue” (Lucashenko 236). Kerry and Rachel are Sue’s gay parents, the ones who re-birthed her and awakened her race consciousness as well as her gender identity. Sue’s escape from violence is accompanied with an increased awareness of race and gender politics and intersectionality, as she mentions marches for black deaths in custody but remarks that “two weeks later another black woman dead at home, and no-one marched cos no-one knew. And so what do ya do? Ya fight it. Sue told herself softly. Ya fight the cunts. And if ya don’t give up, well then maybe – just maybe, ya win” (Lucashenko 233-4).³² Victory is framed in terms of survival as opposed to dominance. As long as the society in which she lives is capitalist, white supremacist, and patriarchal, survival is a victory of its own, and freedom and independence are the most controversial things for a working-class black woman. Finally Sue tells herself “You can do it, you can survive, and when ya do, that’s when you can really start to live,” having found a temporary home with her friends, and living on her own once she has healed (Lucashenko 245).

May’s path in *Swallow the Air* is geared towards the constitution of her own identity away from violence. Even when she moves to Sydney and becomes

³² See more information on Aboriginal deaths in custody:
<http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2007/02/palm-f03.html> (accessed 25 Oct. 2015).

homeless, May believes in her own independence: “I didn’t need to be saved; I wasn’t waiting for a stupid hero. But one came anyway, not in a costume, but wearing a purple t-shirt, and baring too-perfect false teeth” (Winch 95). Joyce, the Aboriginal woman who takes her into her house, fulfils a similar role to Kerry and Rachel in awakening the teenage protagonist’s consciousness of her own power over constructing her subjectivity. Joyce tells her to “[c]ome stay with the women and me. Beats being around bloody strangers, you got family in the city too girl, come have a feed” (Winch 96). Joyce opening her house to May and sharing her food, letting her into her family, alludes to the need for displaced people to recreate communities wherever they are. In Redfern, May faces the reality of the Aboriginal diaspora, for “[b]oth home and elsewhere – wherever she travels and relocates – are sites of dislocation [...] the bodily, psychological, and spiritual effects of belonging fully nowhere” (Friedman 191). This is why she must leave and keep moving until she finds belonging inside herself.

On the road inland to her ancestral homeland, May meets Aboriginal elder Issy who tells her to walk along the river until “a tourist sign, big blue and yellow one, of a knife and a plate and a fork,” the image suggesting that May must learn to combine Aboriginal walking traditions and colonial mapping to find her own way (Winch 158). Issy adds that “Bargan is boomerang [...]. You’ll be back,” reinforcing the idea that both the journey and the return are essential parts of May’s quest for home (Winch 159). May eventually awakens to the interconnectedness of the world and realises her place within it:

This land *is* belonging, all of it for all of us. This river is that ocean, these clouds are that lake, these tears are not only my own. They belong to the whales, to Joyce; they belong to Charlie, to Gary, to Johnny, to Issy, to Percy, to Billy, to Aunty, to my nannas, to their nannas, to their great nannas’ neighbours. They belong to the spirits. To people I will never even know. I give them to my mother. (Winch 183; original emphasis)

She realises something that Kerry has to tell Sue – that one can be Aboriginal anywhere – and this spurs her return to the city. In the chapter aptly entitled “Home,” May comes back to Wollongong:

I know what the word really means, home. My mother knows that I am home, at the water I am always home. Aunty and my brother, we are

from the same people, we are of the Wiradjuri nation, *hard water*. We are of the river country, and we have flowed down the rivers to estuaries to oceans. To live by another stretch of water. Salt. Even though this country is not my mother's country, even though we are freshwater, not salt-water people, this place still owns us, still owns our history, my brother's and my own, Aunty's too. Mum's. They are part of this place; I know now that I need to find them. (Winch 191, 194; original emphasis)

Hers is a new home born of the experience of displacement, it is the land that saw her loved ones be born, live, and die. Once she realises this she can be reunited with Aunty and Billy, and three broken people together can become whole again (Winch 196).

Ken Plummer asserts that "the existence of a new women's culture, a new social world, enables identities to be built in new ways as 'survivors'" (76). May, like Sue, builds a survivor identity that allows her to transform her experience and regain control over her subjectivity and her relationships. In the words of Canadian First Nation writer Lee Maracle: "[i]f your home is filled with useless and harmful violence, then revolution will bring peace and tranquillity. Revolution is not always violent, but it is always the opposite of what has been" (129). As Sue and May's journeys take them from a violent home to a peaceful one, they have succeeded in bringing revolution to their lives, literally overturning the regime of violence.

Like bell hooks, the Aboriginal teenagers find that for black women home resides in the political act of remembering as opposed to nostalgia; it is ancestral memory and the memory of a trauma that goes back centuries. hooks writes: "I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond boundaries, yet I needed also to return there. [...] At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations" (1990 148). The meaning of home expands along with the protagonist's horizon, until she realises that it is through the return to the ancestral home and the other return back to the city that home can be constructed, only through movement that identity can be rebuilt. For Friedman, travel and exile are "the itineraries of being as becoming, identity forming in the movements through space, identity in motion" (205). Home as an imaginary place is reimagined as a space of possibilities that allows the protagonist to look outside of herself and reach others. For White

Barbadian artist Annalee Davis: “we are all forced to reckon with the fact that ‘home’ may no longer be a real physical space but a notion we carry deep within our selves. The ultimate journey is within” (460). Sue and May’s physical journey enables them to undertake the journey within and find peace and freedom from external and internal violence.

1.3 (Un)Homely Violence: Inscriptions

1.3.1 The Destruction of Home

Plummer gives the following graphic definition of narratives of sexual assault:

It entails the stark physical horror of bloody bodily pain: cutting, choking, beating, stabbing, throttling, gagging. [The body] may be penetrated orally, anally, genitally – by any unwanted object, a bottle, a fist, a penis; it may be touched by uninvited and fumbling hands; it may find an unwelcome and stinking tongue inserted into a mouth; there may be the unsolicited wolf-whistle, the lecherous stare from afar, the homophobic slander: all can violate and defile and leave scars in their wake. (69)

As I type this quotation I too am affected by the meaning of the words, and as you read it so are you. What then is the effect on the reader of the violence of the text? According to Benjamin Noys, “a form of violence is intrinsic to the very act of representation itself” (12). Representing means sifting reality through the filter of one’s consciousness by forcing it into a coherent framework but also by marching the reader along the words towards the writer’s chosen destination. Of course the reader is free to stop reading at any point, but then she would not be a reader anymore. The reader, the one who persists with the text and is subject to the author’s will, is also a victim of the text.

Tawhai puts her characters through (extra)ordinary ordeals, cruel yet usual, but she refuses to posit them as sacrificial figures since “[t]he metaphorical symbolism of sacrifice inscribes a dubious transcendental agency on the body of the victim” and serves to reassure the reader that pain must happen in order to trigger

narrative resolution (Heim 20). It is noteworthy that Māori fiction in general has always confronted depictions of violence and its consequences, and authors have tried to offer solutions to its causes in society (Prentice, 1999 158).³³ The solution of a return to the land and the traditions that bound Māori people together as a mutually beneficial community is notably absent from Tawhai's stories. According to Jennifer Lawn, her representation of violence is uncharacteristic of Māori writing and departs from earlier texts by "de-symbolising it, stripping it of any archetypal or regenerative force" (11). There is no cathartic relief, and as opposed to Alan Duff and Keri Hulme, Tawhai does not call for Māori rituals and cultural traditions such as tangi, or funeral rites, for example, which are left out of her writing entirely.

Of course, "the shock that a literary representation of violence can evoke is radically different from the trauma that the witnessing of real violence entails," and literary violence cannot be equated with physical violence (Heim 16). The author enacts a form of violence by forcing the reader to bear witness to horrifying acts of cruelty and suffering, yet as opposed to (often visual) forms of art sometimes called "torture porn," Tawhai's violence is never gratuitous, nor does it carry the suggestion that spectators are expected to find it thrilling or arousing (Hallam 230). Sielke argues that "black women's post-modernist fiction [...] reclaims a territory of subject formation and does so, significantly, without parodic distance" (158). I argue that this is also Tawhai's position as a writer as she refuses to make concessions and denies the reader relief from the everyday experience of violence.

In 1995, Plummer prophesied that by 2020 "there may be less need to shout the story of rape and harassment because it will have been incorporated into the taken-for-granted stock of stories of everyday life" (79). The mainstreaming of stories of sexual violence is precisely the reason why we need to keep telling those stories. As Tawhai shows with her varied line-up of victims and abusers, each act is a new violation, a new assault, and taking violence for granted would entail a destruction of individual subjectivity. Michelle Keown remarks that the stories in *Dark Jelly* "push themes of mental illness and sexual violence to new limits" (2013

³³ Alan Duff, Keri Hulme, Patricia Grace, and Witi Ihimaera among others have written about domestic violence in their fiction.

46). We can add that they also push the limits of the reader by testing the amount of uncanny violence one is able to bear.

Narratorial judgement may make a difference to the way the reader witnesses violence and whether complicity or empathy prevails as the dominant feeling (Heim 17). The absence of judgment, whether as lack or denial, appears characteristic of women's writing, perhaps surprisingly in relation to gendered violence, but the primary texts under examination in this thesis are written from an unapologetically personal point of view and testify to a desire to let the reader draw their own conclusions based on their own value system. This affected neutrality also points to the perceived amorality of settler society and to the difficulty for Indigenous authors to reconcile traditional ethics with colonial values. The reader as witness receives the burden transferred from the written victim and survivor via the medium of the written word, yet the relationship is always superficial and the reader can never "feel" the victim's pain (Scarry 7). Through witnessing, nonetheless, we grant pain "the status of an event, a happening in the world, rather than just the 'something'" one feels, and thus through witnessing we give pain a life outside of the boundaries of the body in pain and into the world we inhabit (Ahmed 2004, 29-30). For this crossing to happen, there needs to be a distinction between the being in pain and the world around them, and this presupposes a certain consciousness of being in the world.

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger calls being-in-the-world "the relation of existence to being in the whole: the understanding of being" (1996 10fn). His concern with being in relation to dwelling and building rewrites the concept of home as the enabler of human existence.³⁴ When home ceases or fails to play its part as the place where one learns to "be in the world," the destruction of the self is unavoidable. In the final story of *Dark Jelly*, Tawhai introduces to the reader Violet, a young girl routinely physically and sexually assaulted by her father in their house:

³⁴ Heidegger gets to this conclusion through linguistic analysis, relevant in the context of Indigenous writing in English because of its linguistic parentage with German. Thus in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, he writes: "*ich bin, du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell," meaning that the equivalence of being with dwelling is part of our human linguistic existence.

It didn't bother her. It wasn't real. Nothing was. She was a conscious being. Everyone else was an illusion. She was here to experience feeling. When she breathed into the pain, it became academic, and she could focus with detachment on the way it pulsed and peaked, and then receded. There were different gradings and flavours to pain. She had come to be quite familiar with it. Sharp pain, dull pain, diffused pain, specific pain, bright pain. (Tawhai, 2011 229)

Violet's experience of dissociation is so extreme that it becomes a manifestation of an entrenched belief in the un-reality of reality caused by violence. Her dissociation from reality is reflected by dissociation from her own body, as when her father forces his fingers in her vagina: "She tensed, trying to manage the pain, to breathe through it, to brace against it. It was a feeling of the body, a sensation, that was all" (Tawhai, 2011 230). Like most of Tawhai's victim characters, Violet has developed her own coping strategy, in this case leaving her body behind and pretending to be pure consciousness, yet she is unable to recognise where her body ends and where the world begins.

Despite the many forms taken by violence, and its even more varied effects on people and functions in narratives, it can only ever result in material and immaterial destruction. Jean-Claude Nancy remarks that violence:

denatures, wrecks, and massacres that which it assaults. Violence does not transform what it assaults; rather, it takes away its form and meaning. It makes it into nothing other than a sign of its own rage, an assaulted or violated thing or being: a thing or being whose very essence now consists in its having been assaulted or violated. (16)

Violence is not transformative but destructive, and any transformation occurring in its aftermath is one performed by the victim as a reaction to the attack on the essence of her subjectivity. Violet's awareness of the position of her self in the world has been impeded by regular abuse. Violence damages subjectivity and leaves in its wake a victim living a bare life, after Giorgio Agamben's definition of "a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast" (1998, 109). Violet is simultaneously less and more than human, at once beastly and cosmic, stark naked and draped in the fabric of the universe, "sublime and devastated" (Kristeva 2).

When dating gang prospect Jihad, Violet starts taking opiates: "Drugs showed cracks in the fabric of the world. [...] Everything shifted. There were multiple

possibilities” (Tawhai, 2011 231). Drugs offer a quick way to escape from her immediate environment and her body in pain, yet as she keeps injecting herself, “[t]he sores became worm holes into her body” (Tawhai, 2011 231). As a victim of sexual violence, Violet is hyper-feminised through the apparition of additional sexual orifices in her body. She is both holy and holey, the border between body and world fluid and punctured by its abjection of the self (Kristeva 4-5). The “worm holes” also refer to wormholes, or interruptions of the space-time continuum that are theoretically traversable and could allow us to travel through time and space.

Like her universe, the fabric of Violet’s body is torn and reveals intimate cracks, while her extreme disembodiment allows her to comment on the state of her body and the internal wounds that would never heal with surgical detachment: “Injuries healed, and new ones came and went, but her nerves had jammed, and the pain message being sent to her brain was permanently switched on, even without stimulus. She got used to it, and carried on, although the burden was heavy” (Tawhai, 2011 233). The permanent presence of pain is detached from the external stimulus, as for her pain is real and violence is not. Violet’s body is not even hers but a commodity that her father, the aptly named Trader, loses to a more aggressive owner. Despite moving out of her father’s house, Violet cannot escape violence: “She wasn’t surprised when Jihad began to hit her. She had missed it, even. Pain had come to be grounding for her” (Tawhai, 2011 232). Extreme victimisation means that she knows herself only through pain as a silent reminder of her existence. Heim’s remark that “[s]evere pain is something like a state of pure sentience, which blots out everything else in our consciousness” can help shed light on Violet’s obsession with the unreal character of reality to account for her pain (18).

Since the abuse on her body started before she can remember, like Ivy in “Men’s Business” Violet does not know the boundaries of her body and conflates it with the universe. Barbara Cooke explains, after Scarry, that torture is dehumanising and “ensures that a once socialized being for whom the world outside the boundaries of his or her own body once held meaning, and whose words and deeds affected that world, becomes to him or herself nothing more than a suffering body for whom no stimuli exists beyond their own pain” (2013, 189). Violet has no being-in-the-world,

rather, she is the world. When Jihad beats her unconscious, she wonders “if her neck had snapped from the force of that last blow [...], if the whole world would have flipped back broken on to itself, with the force of an answering whiplash,” as Jihad and his friends treat her like a slave, “[a]s if the world revolved around them. When, quite clearly, it revolved around her” (Tawhai, 2011 233, 232). Concentrating so much pain in one body makes it spill over and concentrates the world inside Violet.

She then begins to doubt her own trauma. If there is no reality external to the subject (Violet) then there are no real events to intrude on her psyche, and yet she suffers from the “elision of consciousness” Lawn ascribes to Tawhai’s characters and retreats further and further into her interior world (13). Violet’s reflections on the un-reality of reality lead her to question her very existence: “she wondered if that was where she really was anyway; trapped inside some brain, somewhere. She didn’t know if it was her own. She did know that it didn’t belong to any of these projections that passed for people” (Tawhai, 2011 235). She is looking the reader directly in the eyes at this point, from the inside of our brains out so to speak, as if trapped inside of us so her pain becomes our pain while we read her story. The author self-consciously puts her character through this ordeal only to reveal that the destruction of her reality is the destruction of our reality, and to illustrate how violence not only destroys Violet’s body but also her human essence.

Having known only violent homes, she finds her full realisation as “Violent Violet.” The lack of sense of self and reality drives her to the ultimate act of destruction: taking someone else’s life as she asphyxiates a little boy on the beach.³⁵ Despite thinking about the consequences of her actions “[s]he had no fear. She had no fear of being caught, punished, abused. She had no fear of pain. She had no fear of death. It could not touch her. It was her world” (Tawhai, 2011 237). Violence destroys subjectivity, leaving an empty shell in its wake, a house without a home and a body without a being, who sees herself as a being without a soul because she has nothing to lose. Violet cannot be saved and she cannot find home.

³⁵ The beach is often associated with the uncanny for Māori writers: it is the place of the first rift, the brutal fight between Joe and Kerewin in *the bone people* as well as *Potiki*’s interstitial space, “a nothing place” (Grace, 1987 175). Turner remarks that “the beach is a comfort zone for Pakeha, a settler perimeter, seemingly a place without history,” while for the Māori it is a powerful locus of in-betweenness (31).

1.3.2 *The Torture Room of the Uncanny*

The consolidation of the Māori short story in the late 1960s in the midst of the Māori Renaissance marks a point where Māori literary consciousness turned towards bringing to light social and political issues affecting Indigenous people, particularly visible in Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera's early writings (New 155). In the mid-1980s, Keri Hulme's *the bone people* changed the expectations of Māori writing and was deeply marked by violence, along with Grace's *Potiki* and Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* published in the same decade. Readers then began to expect "a more confrontational tone and representations of a harsher reality in Maori fiction," an expectation that was met and even surpassed by the publication of Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* in 1990, the novel that cemented Māori literature's role in exploring violent behaviours and their effect on individuals and the community (Heim 14). According to Keown, Alice Tawhai inscribes herself in this tradition:

exploring death, violence and cruelty with the detached precision and linguistic dexterity of Keri Hulme; probing Maori social dysfunction with the brutal honesty of [...] Alan Duff; and delineating the minutiae of place, colour and texture, and the warmth of interpersonal relationships, in a manner commensurate with the work of [Patricia] Grace. (2013 46-7)

Detachment, brutality, and a concern with intersubjectivity are indeed central features to Tawhai's three collections.

As opposed to her predecessors, however, Tawhai's stories start with a situation of violence into which the reader intrudes, rather than a situation of peace intruded upon by violence, and the denouement occurs when the reader leaves the text or the author withdraws it from us. The unfolding of the text is cyclical in nature and I argue that its function is cyclical too, aiming at expressing and mimicking the circularity of violence. The short story is particularly suited to the expression and reflection of the a-temporality of violence through the disjointed memories of survivors. When Frank O'Connor writes of the short story that "it is organic form,

something that springs from a single detail and embraces past, present, and future,” he could be writing about violence and pain, whose presence in the text “bleeds out” and colours the entire narrative (22). Here lies the paradox of a literary form that is simultaneously fragmentary and free from the conventions of narrative patterns, as well as self-contained and claustrophobic.³⁶ Indeed, the short story writer cannot take as subject the entirety of human existence and must select an angle of approach, meaning that fragmentation and a one-dimensional point of view are inbuilt in the form itself (O’Connor 21).

The short story’s link with orality is also a tenuous one: “the postcolonial short story often occurs in isolation from its readers. This sense of alienation is complemented by the postcolonial short story’s emergence [...] as an expressive medium for themes of fragmentation, displacement, diaspora and identity” (Awadalla and March-Russell 3). Tawhai’s reader is alienated yet intruding, outside yet peeping in. In the postcolonial context, women in particular are prolific short story writers and subjects, and Maggie Awadalla and Paul March-Russell account for this situation by stating that “[t]heir paradoxical and ambiguous place within colonial and postcolonial society renders their lives suitable subject matter for the short story” (7). As we have seen with sexual violence, the marginalisation of Indigenous women is still a central issue in settler countries. O’Connor’s study of the short story provides another argument to explain the form’s popularity when he asserts that it “has never had a hero. What it has instead is a submerged population group” (18). Although O’Connor has Irish and Jewish communities in mind, women and Indigenous people clearly fit the description of a submerged population, indeed he adds that the short story’s characters are “wandering about the fringes of society” and that the form displays “an intense awareness of human loneliness” (19). Tawhai’s characters are also marginalised and lonely, barely sketched yet intensely alive creations.

Returning to the image of the home, Iris Murdoch writes that the “novel must be a house fit for free characters to live in” (271). Although Lucashenko and Winch’s

³⁶ Ihimaera notes: “When you write in English, because there are narrative forms to consider, you tend then to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. But in Maori, most of our work has to do with different literary forms, with genealogy” (230). We can ascribe the flourishing genre of the Māori short story to the appeal of “different” (i.e. non-western) literary forms, and the short story in particular, with its arguably less constraining formal conventions.

characters find a home in the Australian novel, Murdoch's statement does not take into account the question of the short story in relation to the concept of home. As we have seen with "As it is in Heaven" and Victoria's confinement to her bedroom, short stories of violence are not fit for Murdoch's free characters: Tawhai's stories are (bed)rooms with bound characters. If the novel is Murdoch's home, then the short story is Coetzee's torture room, "a site of extreme human experience, accessible to no one save the participants" (13). This is especially true of stories of domestic and/or sexual violence where the abuser and the victim, like the torturer and the victim, share an imposed and unnatural intimacy. Like torture, domestic and sexual violence usually take place in an enclosed space between characters exemplifying the extremes of agency and helplessness. Coetzee adds that "[i]n the torture room, unlimited force is exerted upon the physical being of an individual in a twilight of legal illegality, with the purpose, if not of destroying him, then at least of destroying the kernel of resistance within him" (13). The torture room is the locus two human beings enter and two beings less than human come out from, the torturer's humanity jeopardised by his cruelty and the tortured's by being treated like a beast.

For Scarry, "[i]n torture, it is in part the obsessive display of agency that permits one person's body to be translated into another person's voice" (18). The transference of the voice from one body to another is not dissimilar to the transference of the author's written voice to the reader's internal reading voice. Giving pain a voice is a near impossible task, since pain both resists and destroys language by "bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (Scarry 4). Cries and screams are arguably rare in cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse where the victim is told to keep silent and threatened with more pain or death. Scarry adds that our "ability to bring about the cessation of torture depends centrally on [the] ability to communicate the reality of physical pain to those who are not themselves in pain" (9). To narrate pain means to artificially bring it to the surface for the reader's appreciation, as opposed to reproducing its effect. The victims are characters whose destiny awakens the reader's interest, not real human beings in pain. Despite its a-temporality, Scarry argues, "the most crucial fact about pain is *its presentness* and the most crucial fact about torture is that it *is happening*" (9; original

emphasis). Its constant presence forecloses the possibility of moving beyond the pain; once it is written it remains always present on paper, it is constantly happening somewhere, in reality and in the text.

The short story's brevity does not allow the reader to determine the long-term consequences of violence either, and this may be where its limitations lie, as the form is particularly suitable to the expression of loneliness, the loss of Indigenous culture and traditions, the a-temporality and fragmentation of violence, and the pervasiveness of the unhomely in the postcolonial world. In 1919, Freud coined the term uncanny from the German *unheimlich*, arguing that "the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (15). For victims of domestic violence, violence is homely in the sense that it is familiar and ordinary, yet it is unhomely as it makes the victim's home a place of fear and alienates her from her own body. Not being at home in one's body is a familiar occurrence for the victim, and therefore one that she may seek to sustain, as in the case of Violet's addiction to pain. The experience of the uncanny in Tawhai's writing is partly concealed from the reader, thus emphasising its intimate aspect. Fear mixed with expectation trigger the uncanny by turning the home and the body into unhomely spaces through extreme dissociation and detachment. Victoria and Violet's punctured and hollowed bodies are sites of the uncanny confrontation of domestic violence as a familiar occurrence, and violence as the unhomely that makes home uninhabitable.

Bhabha's reading of Freud's uncanny in the postcolonial context highlights its consequence in the displacement of the border between the body, the home, and the world. For Bhabha, the domestic space is a site for "history's most intricate invasions" (1992 141). Colonisation and the sexual exploitation of Indigenous women and children represent a large-scale form of invasion of western history into individual homes, homelands, and cultural spaces. If the "unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence," it is all the more relevant in relation to the multiple traumas inflicted upon Indigenous bodies, minds, and communities by colonial powers (Bhabha, 1992 144). Like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Tawhai's short stories enact

what Bhabha calls “a haunting of history” through reminders of the consequences of settlement in the 21st century, and demonstrate the uncanny potential of women’s permeable bodies, particularly since feminism blurred the borders between public and private spheres (1992 147; 1994 15).

The uncanny as the experience of being simultaneously in place and out of place, combining the familiar and the unfamiliar, situates the victim of domestic violence’s disembodied body as the site of such a paradox. Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs remark that in settler countries, “the “uncanny” can remind us that a condition of unsettledness folds into this taken-for-granted mode of occupation” (Gelder and Jacobs 24). Britain’s antipodean colonies exist in the British psyche as “duplicitous object[s]” that are both familiar and exotic and where one may find a culture close to “home” albeit in an alien landscape (Gelder and Jacobs 27). Gelder and Jacobs define the settler/immigrant uncanny as the fact that “one is innocent (‘out of place’) and guilty (‘in place’) simultaneously. And this is entirely consistent with postcoloniality as a contemporary moment, where one remains within the structures of colonialism even as one is somehow located beyond them or ‘after’ them” (24). This prompts me to argue that we can speak of an Indigenous uncanny: the fact that one is in the place of one’s ancestors and simultaneously out of their legitimate space, occupying bodies that they are told are not theirs, and feeling a heightened sense of disembodiment generated by the uncanny repetition of violence towards and within their home. For Tawhai, there is no home for Indigenous women to go back to, no retreat, and no escape from the torture chamber of the mind.

1.4 Conclusion: Writing Violence out of the Home

Thus, we have seen how the self and the community’s sense of home, embodiment, and of being at home in the world are affected by violence. Through an exploration of the nature and function of violence in the corpus, I conclude that, if it is possible for Lucashenko and Winch’s characters to escape violence and create a new home, Tawhai’s characters are forever locked inside the torture chamber of the

text. However, as Cooke notes, such an interpretation assumes a normative understanding of human subjectivity with “the self as a human being in relationships with other human beings and the material world” (182). Intersubjectivity, the notion on which this thesis is predicated, posits that selfhood is “forged within *encounters* with other human beings and things” and that the way the self interacts during those encounters is reformed by our subjectivity (Cooke 182; original emphasis). Violence as an intersubjective act where one person (or several people) inflicts pain (material or immaterial) on one person (or several people) is a corrupted form of communication that forecloses reciprocity and exchange between relational selves. As Maryanne Dever points out in her essay on Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*, “[v]iolence, it appears, may represent then an extreme or perverse form of the *lingua franca*” (31). In some cases it can replace all other forms of communication, to the extent that it becomes language itself.³⁷

Similarly to domestic violence making the familiar home unhomely, structural violence ensures that there is no place for the Indigenous diaspora of settler nation-states to go home to. Friedman reminds us:

The story of homemaking is often the history of home razing – that is, the razing of someone else’s home to clear the way for one’s own settlement. The end of one people’s wandering can be the beginning of another’s diaspora. [...] Home making built upon the unmaking of the homes of others; it’s history’s return of the repressed. It happens again and again – the uncanny repetitions of a territorial species, of peoples yearning for home and making others homeless out of the force of their own desire and suffering. (202)

The history of the colonisation and settlement of Oceania is the history of Indigenous home razing, of the displacement and replacement of Indigenous homes by white houses. For contemporary Aboriginal women writers, home can be reimagined through writing back to ancestral traditions and writing forward to younger generations. Positioning themselves as links between the past and the future, they write a home of their own in 21st century Australia, at times in dialogue with, but mostly unconcerned by, their white neighbours. As A. Davis notes, “writing home” means using writing both as a “means of communication with home” and “finding

³⁷ See Chapter 3 on the breakdown of communication in *the bone people*.

ways to express the conflicted meaning of home in the experience of the formerly colonized” (129). This is relevant to the experience of the Indigenous writer for whom home is so close yet so far, and in the case of *Stolen Children* the anxiety that home could be anywhere but they may never know with certainty.

For Indigenous authors, home is created through writing about displacement and loss, and the violence of home razing, which Friedman calls “blood on the ground of being” (206). The act of writing itself is a step towards breaking the cycle of violence for survivors of abuse and colonialism. Boehmer notes a salient feature of postcolonial literature in “the conversion of imposed dumbness into self-expression, the self-representation by the colonial ‘body’ of its scars, its history” (1993 272). Writing is asserting one’s on-going presence and survival, and as such it is an act of defiance of the colonial system and its totalising, genocidal violence. It is an act of self-articulation crucial to the process of decolonising the Indigenous mind and collective body, all the more important for women since the female body is “that most fetishized and silent of body symbols,” whose image is instrumentalised by both colonial and anti-colonial male writing to forward their respective agendas (Boehmer 1993 274).

Freeing the self and community from violence and finding home are central concerns for displaced people dispossessed of traditional languages, land bases, and ways of knowing. It is through the recovery of these knowledges and practices, or alternatively the creation of new syncretic ways, that the Indigenous voice is making itself heard. Even though the medium is often the English language, a set of tools and modes of representations that was imposed on them and replaced their native tongues, we will see in Chapter 3 how it can be reappropriated to suit new modes of expression. Boehmer remarks that wholeness and identity are formed through “gathering together the self in language, usually by way of narrative, by way of that which at once alienates and yet connects” (1993 275). English simultaneously alienates and connects Indigenous writers, alienating them from their forbears and connecting them across tribal, national, and racial divides with the rest of the English-speaking world and allowing them to share the stories of trauma, resistance, and resilience examined in Chapter 4. In the next chapter, I explore the formation of

(inter)subjectivity between carers and their carers in Indigenous women's disability narratives and the impact this has on the community.

Chapter 2.

Caring for Cognitive Difference

“I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. [...] When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination. Indeed everything and anything except me.” (Ellison 3)

Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* (1952) is concerned with the experience of a black man in the Southern states of the US, yet the quotation above has been variously cited to articulate the disabled experience and the Australian Aboriginal experience (Ghai 90; Dodson, 2003a 38). Ellison alludes to the visible invisibility of difference, in other words the tendency of mainstream society to project its own anxieties about belonging and normativity onto the marked body of the Other.

In *Representing Autism*, Stuart Murray states that “[a]ll critical work that has any kind of claim to be worthwhile needs to be aware of its positioning” (2008 18). An able researcher of disability, and a neurotypical researcher of cognitive difference, must have as clear and ethical a positioning as a white researcher of Indigenous material. Like Murray’s, my scholarly interest in cognitive “impairment” stems from personal relationships with relatives and close friends diagnosed with mental illness. I became aware of the disconnect between individuals as I knew them and their condition as labelled by medical diagnostics. This spurred me on to reflect on the possibility of considering cognitive difference not as impairment but as behavioural idiosyncrasy and socially constructed deviance. It is in this frame of mind, thinking about mental and intellectual disability as lack of fit with social structures rather than essentialised abnormality, that I approach the texts under study this chapter.

In disability studies as in postcolonial studies, the rejection of universalising Enlightenment doctrines goes hand in hand with the growing acceptance of the inescapability of researchers’ own subjectivity and affect. Keith Ballard asserts in his introduction to *Disability, Family, Whānau and Society* that “[t]he idea that we can be ‘objective’ is now rejected by many researchers. All of us, researchers included, see, interpret and understand our world through lenses coloured by our culture, gender, values, beliefs, prejudices, passions and experiences,” hence this positioning

statement (22). Furthermore, I am using the terms illness and disability interchangeably to refer to characters with mental difficulties. Indeed, individuals can see themselves as having a mental illness, but the benefit they receive from the state may be conditioned on being recognised as mentally disabled.³⁸ The distinction between the two is less clearly delineated than in the case of physical illness and disability, thus allowing for more flexible self-definitions.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between disabled characters and their carers, and on both groups' identity as fragmentary and fluctuating. The narratives present characters who struggle to find a place within settler society because of their Indigeneity and disability, and demonstrate how the disconnect between intersectional individual and normative society is particularly heightened in the case of disabled Indigenous women living in ableist, white supremacist, patriarchal states (Smith and Watson xiv; Longley 371). Founding scholars of literary disability studies Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell note that textual representations of disability are informed by "the way in which physical and cognitive differences have been narrated as alien to the normal course of human affairs. To represent disability is to engage oneself in an encounter with that which is believed to be off the map of 'recognizable' human experience" (2000 5). Indigenous authors Patricia Grace, Lisa Cherrington, and Vivienne Cleven enter a dialogue with, and challenge, such exclusionary representations of disability in their fiction.

Grace's short story "Eben" (2006) focuses on an intellectually and physically disabled man finding his place in Aotearoa/New Zealand society, while Cherrington's novel *The People-Faces* (2004) is concerned with the unstable relationship between mental illness and mana, and between Pākehā deviance and Māori normalcy, in 1997 with flashbacks of 1977. Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye* (2002) is set in rural Australia and addresses three forms of cognitive impairment: intellectual disability, mental illness, and brain damage; and three causes of disability: genetics, regular abuse, and physical injury. The authors' focus on characterisation reflects a concern with intersubjectivity and relationality in

³⁸ This is notably the case in the UK, where a person with depression (a mental illness) would receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for example: <https://www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit> (accessed 9 May 2015).

Indigenous women's writing, as they attempt to represent the complex identity and social structures of Indigenous people in contemporary Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point out that "the colonial subject inhabits a politicized rather than privatized space of narrative. Political realities cannot be evaded in the constitution of identity" (xxi). The construction of narrative identity is steeped in the cultural and socio-political contexts in which the characters evolve and in which the authors write.

White settler societies pressure Indigenous people to conform to state-sanctioned definitions of Indigeneity far from the lived reality of most people. When Gillian Whitlock comments that Ruby Langford Ginibi's autobiography *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (1988) is the story of "an urban Aboriginal of mixed descent [for whom] identity is presented as *syncretic* rather than *authentic*," she highlights a core tenet of Indigeneity: Indigenous identity is inclusive rather than exclusive, and self-determined rather than externally imposed (159; my emphasis). The twin dynamics of the establishment and enforcement of settler norms imposed by the state and dominant society can be understood using Michel Foucault's 1978 notion of biopower, as Petra Kuppers explains:

Biopower is created by two interlocking systems which focus on knowledge gathering. First, surveilling science disciplines create data about 'normal' bodies (through garnering statistics and creating catalogues about mortality rates, sexual practices, illness incidence, psychological development, etc.). Second, individuals 'discipline' themselves or give attention to being 'normal' in the everyday, that is, they engage in self-surveillance. (5)

The first system is medical, with scientists formulating diagnoses, and the second system is social, made of external and internal pressures to conform to the norm established by the former.

Since some of the texts in this chapter present Indigenous people living traditionally, and others in urban areas, I also investigate "the transsections of two separate but interrelated cultures – one lived in cities as beneficiaries of assimilationist 'betterment,' the other lost but now retraced, through historical, familial, and imaginative reclamations, to ancestrally-linked Indigenous past" (Schaffer and Smith 113). Authors often realise the syncretism of these two cultures

under the banner of Indigeneity, but face many obstacles from both white and Indigenous communities. Indeed, Bart Moore-Gilbert claims, most Aboriginal texts “represent the predicament of those of mixed-race descent, more specifically, as one of psychic and cultural amputation” (3). The symbolism of mixed-race identity as impairment (amputation) is telling of the potential linkages but also disparities between postcolonialism and disability studies, which will be explored in a later section.

Literary representations of disability in Indigenous writing are situated within a western medical framework imported by colonial institutions. This framework includes the designation of difference as impairment, as Murray notes: “[t]he medical framework that surrounds ideas of impairment dominates perception to such an extent that its model of presumed physical or neurological integrity is taken as orthodox in the public consciousness” (2008 xvi). Murray remarks that this model is paradoxically reproduced in most disability fiction, but I argue that Indigenous women’s texts represent a disruption of the dominant narrative of ableism in much the same way they challenge mainstream representations of race, gender, and identity. Ableism as a consequence of colonisation has been explored by scholars such as Clare Barker in her work on disabled children in postcolonial literature: “Ableist discourse (the privileging of able-bodies perspectives and subjugation of disability) was, in fact, pivotal to such ideologies [as colonialism] and it continually bolstered western colonial cultural and racial domination” (2011 8). Ableism and racism often go hand-in-hand to construct an Other which the majority of the population is encouraged to pity, fear, and ultimately blame for society’s failings. However, disability studies still has some way to go to take into account the experience of non-white, non-western disabled people, and this is precisely where “postcolonialism’s attention to cultural specificity can aid in the ‘decolonization’ of disability studies” and support the establishment of a genuinely productive dialogue between the disciplines (Barker, 2011 6; Sherry 17).

Disability studies and postcolonialism, including Indigenous studies, are built around binaries: disabled and non-disabled, coloniser and colonised, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. These binaries act as “pull and push” forces that remain for the most

part extrinsic to the people against whom the mainstream defines itself. Grace's Eben is an example of this pendulum movement: as a character he is "too much," too tall, too crooked, too visibly different, and alternatively rejected by his birth mother, schoolchildren, and fellow buskers, then accepted by his adoptive mother Pani and finally by the town people of Parutai. Whitlock argues that, "if binaries, thinking in terms of origins and authenticity, centre and periphery, and the separation into consistent and homogeneous identities are fundamental to colonizing discourses, then the work of decolonization is to return ambivalence and duplicity, and to look to intersubjectivity in cultural formations and texts" (6). This chapter seeks to bring to light the binaries present in literary Indigenous disability discourse and to show how Indigenous women writers challenge them to establish intersubjectivity in the texts.

One such binary concerns the separation between physical disability and intellectual and mental disabilities. A quick glance at the index of scholarly books on disability reveals that three out of four volumes do not refer explicitly to either intellectual or mental disability beyond a cursory comment in the introduction. This excessive focus on the body leads me to suggest that a more in-depth exploration of the mind is long overdue. Ralph Savarese and Lisa Zunshine ascribe this situation to the history of the discipline: "[a]s it was developing, the field of disability studies did not know what to do with cognitive disability—largely because it did not seem to fit the model of social construction to which it was so committed" (26). For Snyder and Mitchell, it will become necessary in the future to expand the field: "one of the major new areas of research in disability studies will need to be that of cognitive disabilities" (2000 39). However, their prediction will only be realised if researchers make the conscious choice to turn to representations of cognitive difference and neuroatypicality in a discipline still dominated by embodiment theories. As Murray points out, "[t]hat some disability scholars (and, indeed, wider contemporary culture as a whole) seem to think disability is first and foremost oriented around questions of physical impairment adds an extra obfuscatory layer to any desire to look at representations of the condition," referring to the paucity of secondary sources on

cognitive difference as opposed to physical impairment in the critical corpus of disability studies (2008 120).³⁹

In spite of the connotations of material, cultural, and spiritual dispossession that the term often carries, Indigeneity is also framed as an excess of identity. One can be female, Australian, brown-haired, *and* Indigenous for instance; or transsexual, tall, atheist, *and* Indigenous. Disability, on the other hand, despite the additional arrangements it can cause, tends to be represented as a lack of identity. One is damaged, “not all there,” missing a limb, suffering a loss of mobility or a mental deficit. The binary between excess and lack requires further analysis to reveal its complex dynamics in the texts under scrutiny. This chapter is thus structured around apparent binaries in order to examine and question their use in Indigenous women’s writing. Ato Quayson remarks that postcolonial literature “is not undergirded exclusively by the binary opposition of normal/abnormal, but by the *dialectical interplay* between unacknowledged social assumptions and the reminders of contingency as reflected in the body of the person with disability” (21; original emphasis). Social assumptions and the context of the settler state play a crucial role in the construction of Indigenous disabled identity and carer identity.

Snyder and Mitchell refer to the five methodologies common to the discipline of disability studies as “studies of negative imagery, social realism, new historicism, biographical criticism, and transgressive reappropriation” (2000 15). This list reveals a distinct lack of cultural criticism coupled with the underlying assumption that disability only exists (or is only worthy of study) in western societies that are heirs to witch burning, asylum culture, and Erasmus’ *The Praise of Folly*. Following Murray’s assertion that Indigenous texts “use the suggestion of cognitive impairment as part of their outlining of the dynamics of postcolonial societies and cultures,” I use postcolonial disability analysis to examine Grace, Cherrington, and Cleven’s concern

³⁹ Within mental and intellectual disability studies, another binary we could mention is the difference between the disabled child and the disabled adult. Where the child is associated with cuteness, vulnerability, and arouses the non-disabled reader’s protective instinct, the adult is often approached with suspicion and associated with unpredictability and danger. Grace, Cherrington, and Cleven reject this binary, with half the stories in Grace’s collections for example having an elderly (often disabled) narrator, a choice in keeping with the writer’s generation as well as her concern with giving a voice to the silent, the neglected, and the forgotten.

with relationships of care in Indigenous settings (2008, 82). Along with Barker's questions "What do postcolonial fictions tell us about the way disability is understood and negotiated across a range of local contexts and global discourses? And how might we read postcolonial disability representations with attention to both 'metaphorical content' and material 'reality'?" (2011 3), I will ask the following: how do the authors' portrayal of intellectual and mental disability in Indigenous societies, themselves embedded in western ableist nations, participate in the formation of collective identity? In what ways are relationships between informal carers and their carees constitutive of carer and caree identities? And to what extent can caring be understood as a form of relationality and a mode of intersubjectivity?

2.1 Impairment and Spiritual Connection

2.1.1 Compensation and Balance

One of the most readily observable binaries in literary disability studies is that of impairment versus compensation, which is often used to restore a form of narrative balance. This can be manifested through the characterisation of disabled people as possessing extraordinary powers like Sofie in Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye* and Joshua in Cherrington's *The People-Faces*. In her study of disabled children in postcolonial fiction, Barker provides three circumstances for this phenomenon:

Postcolonial literature is replete with exceptional child characters, often with physical or cognitive disabilities, who have privileged access to landmark social and political events; who may possess supernormative forms of knowledge or insight; and whose lives [...] mirror the narratives of infancy, development and conflict that accompany the maturation of the postcolonial 'child-nation.' (2011 2)

In Cleven and Cherrington's novels, the disabled characters are adults, so I am concerned mostly with the ways in which they display supernormative cultural insight, and how they act as touchstones for the Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand nations.

The literary tradition of using disability in Indigenous characters as a marker of spiritual connection can be traced back to the discursive construction of Indigenous people as excessively concerned with the cultural and the spiritual, as opposed to western people's intellectual and critical rationality (Grossman 5-6). The compensation for disability with special spiritual insight seems to play into this stereotype while simultaneously critiquing it by placing disabled Indigenous characters in an ableist settler society, which marginalises them on the basis of their culture, ethnicity, and disability. For Quayson, on the other hand, the association of disability – that is, physical, intellectual and/or mental inferiority according to the impairment model – with spiritual superiority is intrinsic to Indigenous cultures. Indeed, following ethnographic evidence, he argues that “in many non-Western cultures disability is tied to normative injunctions and to powerful enactments of metaphysical beliefs” (Quayson 12). Whether or not this is a form of compensation aiming at the integration of the disabled individual into the community as a productive member is difficult to ascertain on the basis of literary evidence, but the idea of bringing balance to the text by solving a binary between perceived intellectual or mental inferiority and spiritual superiority is worthy of exploration.

Superiority can be manifested by narrative hints at potentially supernatural powers. In *Her Sister's Eye*, Sofie calls the fish her friends and tells gardener Archie Corella: “I’m a fish, Arch. Fish swim in water. Can’t ya know that?” (Cleven 54). This statement could be attributed to her intellectual disability, which is sometimes illustrated by incorrect statements, yet the way she swims in the dangerous river is enough to make Archie believe that she has special powers associated with the river. This is confirmed when, in the novel’s subplot, Nana Vida tells Doris about Sofie’s father Jimmy Salte and how his special power allowed him to save a white man’s cow when he should have drowned in the river (Cleven 79). The mention of Jimmy as gifted but not necessarily disabled contradicts the idea of compensation in favour of intergenerational transmission. While Sofie’s gift is for swimming in the river, her sister Murilla’s is speed on land like their mother Mertyl, of whom Nana Vida recalls: “She moves so fast, it’s unnatural, I’m seein it but not believing” (Cleven 227). Murilla acts as the main carer for her sister Sofie and employer Caroline; she is not disabled herself and her power is inherited from her mother Mertyl.

The supernatural compensation aspect appears more present in *The People-Faces*, where Joshua's foresight and his visions of the mysterious "people-faces," possibly ghosts or ancestors, seem intricately tied with his long-term experience of mental illness and subsequent commitment to psychiatric facilities (Cherrington 13). His grandmother Maka describes this ability to her daughter, Joshua's mother Hine, in Māori terms linking his powers to their culture: "He's the only one of us who sees the old people. [...] And he hears our tupuna. They talk to him, Hine" (Cherrington 114). Joshua holds a special place in the family at the marae of Te Kohinga because he acts as a link between the tūpuna, or ancestors, and their living descendants.

It is also Maka's opinion that Joshua's connection with the spiritual world is not entirely positive and takes a toll on him: "Joshua has always had the gift," she says, "[i]t is too strong in him" (Cherrington 113). Here is a hint that Joshua's mental disability may be the result of his supernatural powers, and not the other way round, so his distress could be a form of compensation for his heightened spiritual sensitivity and not the other way round. However, his are gifts that he cannot control on his own and that need to be "nurtured" and "directed" by Maka, but may also be managed effectively by a strong Māori community (Cherrington 114). According to Maka, Joshua suffers from mental illness because he carries his gift alone and lacks a traditional community around him, which is why she forcibly removes him from Hine's custody as a boy to raise him on his ancestral land. Joshua's deteriorating mental state proves Maka wrong however, and so does the ghost of Koro Zac, Maka's late husband, who disagrees with his widow about Joshua's education: "Brought up by an old crank who drank too much beer and whom all the locals called porangi behind his back? Brought up by an angry, superstitious old woman [...]?" (Cherrington 157). Maka's failure to look after Joshua echoes Nikki's later attempts, which we will explore in a later section, as Joshua acquires the reputation of being porangi, or mad, like his grandfather.

On the other hand, Maka and Koro Zac's close friend Uncle Rewi expresses his belief that "this was the consequence of our transgressions. That Joshua was to be the one afflicted" (Cherrington 79). For him, Joshua's gift is a karmic retribution for Zac and Rewi breaking tapu, or supernatural condition; a divine utu, or revenge,

bearing down upon the mokopuna to atone for his koro's sins. This is a different form of compensation that puts traditional culture and spirituality centre stage, and restores power to ancestral beliefs all the while linking Indigenous people to their ancestors and their past. Hine's brother Whai discounts the idea that Joshua is disabled in the medical sense: "The Pakeha medicine cannot fix what Joshua has. It never has been able to and it [...] never will!" (Cherrington 241, 248). Whai does not explain what Joshua "has" but we understand that it is not a disease that can, maybe even should, be cured.

In metaphoric terms, Sofie's kinship with the river and Joshua's visions of ancestors as compensations for their intellectual and mental disability respectively may symbolise the value of all human life as precious and of all individuals as valuable to the community. In her work on intellectual disability in Māori contexts, education scholar Jill Bevan-Brown finds that Māori interviewees refer to "the acceptance of intellectual disability as a fact of life, the acceptance of difference and the acceptance of the intellectually disabled person as having value and mana" (209). This idea of "acceptance of difference" stands in sharp contrast with western societies' focus on cure and prevention.⁴⁰ During her study, Bevan-Brown continues, "[p]eople felt strongly that a Māori identity was just as important to an intellectually disabled Māori as it was to a non-disabled Māori" (213). This touches the core of the problem of the formation of a valid disabled Indigenous identity accepted within both Indigenous and settler contexts.

2.1.2 Narrative Prosthesis

According to Snyder and Mitchell, "[c]ompensation – or, rather, schemes of superpower overcompensation – rule the roost of neo-liberal explanatory systems" (2010 117). Their critique takes for object western texts in which disability appears solely as a literary device. This is a slightly different form of compensation from the

⁴⁰ See for example on-going debates about the causes and "prevention" of autism: <http://www.autism.com/prevention> (accessed 23 Apr. 2015).

ones we have already seen as the aim is to make the reader, who stands for the dominant (able) part of society, feel better about themselves by explaining away disability. Thus, Mitchell argues, such stories compensate for deviance via the following narrative steps: exposing difference; calling for an explanation; making difference central to the plot; and fixing the initial problem by doing away with difference altogether (2002, 20). In the corpus of disability literature that Mitchell studies, the “move toward the repair of deviance may involve an obliteration of the difference through a cure, the rescue of the despised object from social censure, the extermination of the deviant as a purification of the social body, or the revaluation of an alternative mode of experience” (2002 20). The Indigenous-authored texts in this chapter resist the cure-or-kill imperative by appealing to traditions and advocating for the radical acceptance of difference.⁴¹

In her latest short story collection *Small Holes in the Silence*, Grace expresses pessimism regarding the possibility of avoiding forced cure and the authorities’ medical intervention through the character of Eben. Paradoxically, the most striking aspect of his story is the absence of medical care despite Eben’s severe motor and neuronal disability: “No one during his lifetime, no doctor or therapist, had had a go at straightening him, and he had never been seen or touched by any such person since he was born” (Grace, 2006 40). This statement depicts medical professionals as neglectful and failing to fulfil their duty of care. On the other hand, Eben is multiply disabled but also described as happy and never ill, thus hinting at his disability as an ontological state rather than a curable illness (Grace, 2006 45). Before her own death, Pani make plans to give Eben a big funeral and a long coffin to accommodate his non-normative body. Upon his death, however, the undertakers break his limbs and bones and straighten him to make his corpse conform to a normative ideal he never matched in life, and which Pani would have not approved of, as “[s]he would have had her child presented at the gates of heaven exactly as he had been in life” (Grace, 2006 58). Through Pani, Grace affirms the perfection of an impaired

⁴¹ Patricia Grace’s novel *Potiki* (1987), which features the death of a disabled character, nonetheless evades Snyder and Mitchell’s schematic narrative structure where the introduction of deviance leads to rehabilitation through either cure or death because Toko remains a strong textual presence after his physical death and narrates parts of the novel. In fact, Toko’s death causes settler discomfort, even unsettlement, for it is followed by increased Indigenous resistance to attempted land seizure.

character who ends up forcefully transformed in an act of benevolent violation. Even his smile is wired like a puppet's, making him look like a negative image of himself: "Eben ended up in death – straight where crooked, crooked where straight – the opposite to what he has been in life" (Grace, 2006 58).

Mitchell and Snyder introduce the notion of "*narrative prosthesis*" to indicate that "disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (2000 49; original emphasis). Although this is observable in most disability narratives, Indigenous authors subvert these tropes in their portrayal of disabled characters. Ato Quayson defines narrative prosthesis as a situation where "the representation of disability serves a pragmatic/cathartic function for the audience and the reader;" indeed the ending of Grace's "Eben" leaves the reader shocked at the final desecration of his corpse, and at the same time uncomfortable at our pity towards the main character and our own guilty thoughts that he may have benefited from being straightened earlier, both feelings foreclosing the possibility of catharsis (2006 25). Grace's "kill-then-cure" story exposes the hypocrisy of western medical institutions and rejects narrative prosthesis as a viable literary device. "Eben" can therefore be read as a "disability counternarrative," for it does not "seek to fully repair or resolve a character's impairment, but rather delves into the social, personal, political and psychological implications of impairment as bequeathing a social awareness" (Snyder and Mitchell, 2000 165). If very few of Eben's mental or intellectual pathways are described in the story, his rich emotional life is expressed at length and starkly contrasts with the dryness of the settler sphere in which he navigates (Grace, 2006 44, 55).

2.1.3 Colonial Restrictions

Barker explicitly links disability with the consequences of the colonial era, arguing that "the social and political fallout from colonial relations – phenomena such as war, population displacement and ongoing poverty – often has directly

disabling effects (in the most literal sense of the term) on postcolonial communities” (2011 10). This is also true of the history of the mental health system in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, inextricable from colonial history for today’s institutions are the direct heirs of colonial establishments. The terms “psychiatric system survivors” and “mental health system survivors” are sometimes used in scholarly and activist texts to designate people with mental health issues and emphasise their frequently negative experiences with institutions of care (Campbell, “System survivors – Is there anything we can do?”). The self-definition of patients as survivors takes on a new meaning when one remembers New Zealand’s infamous 20th-century asylum institutions, denounced by Janet Frame among others (191-198, 213).⁴² In *Feminist Perspectives on Disability*, Barbara Fawcett describes the historical rise of the asylum from the defunct paupers’ workhouse:

Institutions such as the workhouse and the large bureaucratised asylums contained and controlled those deemed incapable of operation in accordance with accepted tenets of surveilling and disciplining themselves. The asylums became increasingly medicalised and also incorporated, in line with the emphasis placed on scientific endeavour and progress, a curative function. (19)

The asylums engendered by this repressive and penitentiary tradition were little more than medicalised prisons aiming at either curing and releasing into society those who complied, or keeping indefinitely those who did not, thus forcing its inmates into a binary reminiscent of narrative prosthesis’s cure-or-kill imperative.

In “Eben,” Pani abducts the boy from the orphanage and takes him to a fictional place named Parutai, a new town that “had been known only as the hidden-away site of an asylum for the insane” (Grace, 2006 49). Implicitly, Grace asks whether it is possible to turn a former asylum, a place of suffering, hierarchy, and denial of humanity, into a town; to turn the abnormal into the ordinary. Mental health institutionalisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand society evolves over the course of Pani and Eben’s lives, and by “the late 1980s the institutions for the disabled began to be disestablished in order to make health care more cost-effective” by releasing many patients into the community (Grace, 2006 53). Humanitarian and economic factors

⁴² As mentioned in Chapter 1, the label “survivor” is problematic, in this case because it can denote a past ordeal while mental health issues are often on-going and/or recurring for sufferers.

encouraged the government to move towards a care-in-the-community model for patients like Eben, chosen for this programme because, in addition to his “docility,” he is described as “useful” and “capable;” he can do “a variety of small duties,” and he “knew his way around town” (Grace, 2006 53). In short, Eben is the model disabled character, except for his physical appearance and his inability to conform to the western model of independence.

Eben’s difference is a source of anxiety for Pani who dreads what will happen to him: “[s]he has the fear that he would be dumped into the mental hospital where [...] no one would understand how capable of love and enjoyment he was” (Grace, 2006 42). After her death, Eben is indeed taken away “by officials from Social Services, prior to being moved to the psychiatric hospital to be pushed and injected and herded” (Grace, 2006 41). Her fear is realised, but instead of being “dumped” like rubbish, Eben is treated like a farm animal “herded” along with those who have been similarly robbed of their individuality. This “taming” and levelling out of individual distinctions is stronger when the patient is Indigenous and placed in westernised institutional care.

Hine Tihi and Ruth Gerson’s essay on disability in Māori settings includes the story of Tepiko, who according to his uncle used to disappear for a few days at a time when he was raised by his grandmother, yet “[i]n a Pākehā setting he would not be allowed to roam. They would have put him away. They would have found something in the rules, course they would. We would have been put away for letting him roam, you know, for not caring for him properly!” (130). According to the uncle, the “proper way” is the Pākehā way, and anything that departs from it is considered deviant, thus putting him and his relatives at risk of detention for not enforcing Pākehā customs with Tepiko. Similarly in *The People-Faces*, Nikki learns that Joshua used to run away when he was living with Maka but their grandmother did not want anyone to know because “[s]he didn’t want social welfare taking him away from her” (Cherrington 189). Like Tepiko who stops disappearing after his grandmother’s death, as he realises his new responsibility towards his whānau, Joshua stops running away and withdraws further into himself when Maka dies.

Joshua is first admitted in the psychiatric unit of a hospital in Palmerston North at sixteen after attempting suicide under the influence of alcohol and marijuana. Despite his suicide attempt Nikki struggles to accept her brother's ailment, repeatedly asserting that "Joshua is not like these people, [...] He isn't one of them" (Cherrington 83). At the same time she associates cognitive differences with otherness and distance, since if he is "like them" (mentally ill), then he is "one of them" (as opposed to being like her). Her reiterated affirmations that Joshua belongs with her rather than in the hospital reveal Nikki's attempts at convincing herself of this fact. Joshua's diagnosis seems to prove her right through its sheer self-contradictory excess. As psychiatrist Derek Summerfield points out, "mental disorders are not facts of nature but cobbled together syndromes, with psychiatrists as the cobblers" (1). Medical professionals in *The People-Faces* cobble together symptoms and attempt hypothetical diagnosis, while Joshua's relatives "just let them keep on talking. Drug-induced psychosis. Prodromal symptoms. Possible bi-polar disorder. Schizoaffective. Schizophrenia. New words that changed with each new admission" (Cherrington 101). The failure of Western psychiatry to diagnose Joshua effectively is expressed through the proliferation of scientific explanations. The first doctor Joshua saw even "said it was the dak [marijuana] that started it all. [...] 'It seems that he has suffered from a drug-induced psychosis'" (Cherrington 129). According to him, Joshua's is an acquired disability that the then 16-year-old brought upon himself through substance abuse. The doctor's careful wording, however, leaves place for uncertainty and questioning, in contrast to Maka's powerful and knowing statements that all Joshua needs is the care of his community.

The doctor in charge of Joshua when Nikki checks him out, on the other hand, expresses concern about his "hypoactive state," flat affect, and "low energy levels," and prescribes the anti-depressant Prozac (Cherrington 102). From the initial hallucinatory psychosis diagnostic, Joshua's doctors have moved towards its opposite: a depressive state. Chris, the English doctor who looks after Joshua at the end of the novel, also forms his own diagnosis of him as "very thought disordered ... delusional ... believed he was god of the sea [...] experiencing a depressive psychotic episode [...] drug induced ... needs intensive alcohol and drug rehabilitation [...] has a mental disorder than requires medication" (Cherrington

257). Chris's impersonal list of symptoms, as opposed to recommendations for care, is symptomatic of the pitfalls of western psychiatry. In Pākehā diagnosis, drugs seem to be a common factor, so inclined are they to prove individual responsibility and that Joshua brought it upon himself. When the police find him on the beach after escaping Nikki's care, she remarks that they "[p]robably thought he was just a druggie. [...] The crisis team came, assessed him and took him to the hospital. This time he's under the Act" (Cherrington 238). This time Joshua is committed to institutional care by the state as opposed to his family. In some way Nikki has failed her role as carer, as it is Pākehā society that determines that sleeping on the beach and "talking" to Tangaroa, the god of the sea, requires internment.

Pākehā resistance to Māori forms of cultural healing can be observed in the novel when Nikki answers the nurse's query about what she and Joshua are planning to do at the marae of Te Kohinga:

"We are," I say slowly, "returning to our turangawaewae." It is all I can think of. [The nurse] coughs. "You'll have to excuse me," she says, "but what is that?" I want to tell her to go and look it up in the bloody dictionary. Just like we have to with her big tauwiwi [non-Māori] words that they use in places like this. And we're too shy to ask them what that means. (Cherrington 101)

Pākehā health professionals use their own obscure specialist vocabulary, and so do Māori people, but the difference is that Pākehā pry into the Māori world and assume that they can know it. Joshua's doctor resists Nikki's request to take her brother home at first, arguing: "it is my professional opinion that it would be in your best interests to stay on in the ward a little longer to ensure that we are able to monitor your mood and medication accordingly" (Cherrington 103). Nikki's unspoken reply, "Joshua, we need to go, you and I," allows Cherrington to juxtapose the doctor's florid but ultimately empty language with Nikki's emotional imperative, and to highlight the irreconcilable difference between the two world views (103).

The other side of Pākehā resistance to Māori holistic healing is Māori distrust in Pākehā objectivist medicine, perceived as dangerous incompetence. Maka warns Hine of what lies ahead for Joshua when he grows up:

“If he goes back to the city, Hine, those Pakeha will get hold of him,” she said. “You are not feeding him with what he needs. You are not nourishing his wairua. They will do what they tried to do with Hakaraia [Koro Zac]. Put him in hospital. Tell him he is sick.” (Cherrington 114)

The feeding metaphor emphasises spirituality as a basic need for survival, and not a luxury as it appears on Abraham Maslow’s (in)famous pyramid of needs (386). Two decades later, when Joshua is an adult, the Māori struggle for culturally appropriate health care is still going strong, this time coming from Uncle Whai who “started up about them [Pākehā doctors and nurses] not being culturally sensitive and not including whanau when Joshua was being assessed. [...] ‘And you think you know what is thought disordered and what’s not? [...] Our people shouldn’t be in here’” (Cherrington 239-40). For Whai, care should be a traditional community decision, not an institutional decision. The absence of common ground between Joshua and the Pākehā doctors’ discourse is obvious for Nikki’s Māori relatives, including cousin Mereana who reassures her that Joshua does not need medication (Cherrington 152). If medication is not appropriate to his case, then does it mean that his ailment still has not been diagnosed properly? The “Maori way” proposed by Maka is also seen as failing, including by Hine who calls Māori lore “what you [Maka] believe in” and “what a whole lot of bullshit!” (Cherrington 115-6). Maka traps her daughter by asking Social Welfare to take the children away and demanding formal custody of Joshua, and thus reveals her supreme hypocrisy in using the very colonial structures she decries in order to break Hine’s familial unit. Even though she asserts that “[t]hose Pakeha hospitals are not places for our people,” Maka fails to offer a viable alternative to Joshua (Cherrington 186).

In the final chapter of *The People-Faces*, entitled “Epilogue 1998,” Joshua is on “sickness benefits,” therefore officially recognised as mentally disabled by New Zealand institutions and treated in a Māori mental health facility (Cherrington 272). Care seems inadequate there too, so modelled on the Pākehā system does the place appear: staff “were always the same. Talking to me [Joshua] like I was stupid” (Cherrington 275). Underestimating the capacity for thought in people with mental disability is a common motif in disability narratives, and invariably leads to the silencing of their voices. In Joshua’s case this is manifested by health professionals talking about him in front of him, as if he was not there, instead of to him, and by

their attempts to impose their rules such as the imperative to participate in communal activities instead of allowing him to read alone in his room (Cherrington 278). When Joshua is warned for getting high on drugs, they do not listen to his justification: “I tried telling them that the dope helped me calm down and get away from the people-faces” (Cherrington 274). While doctors see drugs as the cause of his problems, Joshua sees them as a solution to alleviate his distress.

The Māori mental health institution threatens to expel Joshua if he does not obey their draconian rules, and thus like the Pākehā hospital it is a locus of medical imperialism where foreign concepts of the psyche and care are imposed on Indigenous people. Indeed, staff use labels in Māori as well as in English, with nurse Waimarie calling Joshua *turoro*, meaning sick or invalid.⁴³ Arthur Frank argues that when “political and economic colonialism took over geographical areas, modernist medicine claimed the body of its patient as its territory, at least for the duration of the treatment” (10). Whai uses the same image of western medicine colonising the Indigenous body when he tells Joshua’s doctor:

“I will not let my nephew become yet another victim of Pakeha colonisation!” I [Nikki] nearly begin to choke as he says this. I cannot make the connection between Joshua being in hospital and something that happened over 150 years ago. “You tell me you have my nephew under this compulsory Treatment Act,” he continues. “These are your laws! Not mine. You give him names that we do not understand. They mean nothing to us. He is who he is. What has your medicine ever done for our boy? What my nephew has can only be treated with Maori medicine!” (Cherrington 248)

The reader, like Nikki, is asked to make an imaginative leap between “something that happened 150 years ago” and its on-going consequences in all areas of social life, including health. Whai’s anger is understandable given the ethnocentric arrogance of the English doctor, who wishes Māori would comply with his worldview (Cherrington 253). Although he keeps his patronising thoughts to himself, Chris shares with the reader the low esteem in which he holds Māori ways of knowing: “I need to inform these people of the risks they take. They need to make informed decisions. They need to be educated about what it is that I know” (Cherrington 255).

⁴³ <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&keywords=turoro&search> (accessed 12 Feb. 2015).

This translates into a dismissive attitude when he tells Joshua's whānau "I understand that some of what Joshua experiences is culturally based" and proceeds to launch into a monologue about scientific research and Indigenous research, and which one has more authority (Cherrington 255).

Chris is paradigmatic of proponents of global mental health, which psychiatry scholar Derek Summerfield defines as both "the selling of the products of the Western mental health industry to the non-Western world" and "a lamentable error of epistemology, a category error" (1). Global mental health is arguably a form of medical imperialism, described by Summerfield as follows:

The blithe universalism underpinning global mental health is reproducing the dynamics of the colonial era: the colonised were typically spoken for and unable to control the way they were represented. A salient trait of modern imperialism is to claim to be a progressive movement, setting out to instruct, modernise, and civilise, with Western knowledge taken as definitive. (2)

Postcolonial criticism offers researchers a framework within which to challenge and revise assumptions and knowledges, and therefore to resist and oppose medical imperialism. As Anita Ghai states, "[p]ost-colonialism can destabilize the totalizing tendencies of imported Western discourse. It brings the possibility of problematizing the norms of given cultural practices and a commitment to take responsibility for modifications that result from the situatedness of knowledge" (96). In the context of Indigenous writing, this situatedness is paramount at both individual and community level in order to listen to marginalised voices. Thus, when the doctor and nurse accompany Nikki and Joshua to Te Kohinga to discuss his care with the whānau, Hine gives her daughter the following recommendation: "Don't forget to ask Joshua what he wants to do [...]. They never asked him" (Cherrington 245). Everyone around the disabled individual thinks they know better and can make decisions for him, including Hine.

2.1.4 Enabling Indigeneity

Since disability and Indigeneity are framed by the dominant discourse as identity politics (or deviant forms of identity from the able white norm), it is crucial for the field of postcolonial disability studies to aim at enabling Indigeneity, that is resisting and denouncing an idiom of pity and highlighting instead empowering rhetoric and modes of self-representation. Defining Indigeneity is the first step towards developing a theory of disability in Indigenous studies, and this section is named after the title of Sharon Snyder, Brenda Jo Bruggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's edited collection *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*.

In early 1990s scholarship, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra stated that the term Aboriginalism "has played a similar role to the concept of Negritude" in the francophone postcolonial world (28). They define Aboriginalism as "a set of representations whose final value derives from the role they play in particular struggles and debates," thus rejecting essentialism in favour of a relative and adaptive notion external to Aboriginal identity (Hodge and Mishra 29). Nowadays, scholars prefer the term Aboriginality, a portmanteau of Aboriginal and identity, and a play on the word originality with its connotations of singularity and uniqueness. It is a form of Indigeneity specific to Australian Aboriginal people, constantly refashioned by a tension between external (social, political) pressures and internal strategies of self-determination. Mick Dodson designates constructions of Aboriginality as "the context in which we live" (2003a 33). In settler hands, Aboriginality is a long-established and fluctuating notion modified by the changing needs of the state. Anita Heiss points out that throughout the world "there were and are government definitions of Aborigines based on a caste system defined by blood quantum (half-caste, quarter-caste, full-blood, quadroon). These definitions are used as a means of watering down and eliminating Aboriginal peoples in Australia" (Heiss 2012 123). Imposed definitions of who is Aboriginal and what it means to be Aboriginal have served the enterprise of cultural genocide in settler countries.

One area where outsider constructions of Aboriginality are the most visible is that of land rights, which due to its legal character has exposed a zone of irreconcilable ontological conflict between white Australian and Aboriginal worldviews. Land rights as a state-controlled legal process has "demanded that both

Aborigines and whites develop and articulate definitions of a unique Aboriginal identity” (Jacobs 31). These definitions are often at odds with each other and between distinct Aboriginal nations, and accordingly land rights remain a highly divisive issue. Jane Jacobs remarks:

There is considerable pressure upon aboriginal groups to prove the validity of their claims by displaying a culturally unique, and preferably traditional association with the land. The less a group appears traditional or is known to be traditional by way of popularisation of their culture the greater the pressure for them to prove their Aboriginality. (41)

Since land rights cases require claimants to put forward a version of Aboriginal identity tied to their ancestral land, Barry Morris is right to affirm that, by “locating the ‘otherness’ of Aborigines within its own institutional sites, the state has attempted to contain and control the possible sites and expressions of otherness. They have also provided new areas of struggle in the construction of identity which resist such hegemonic relations of power” (81). The state’s request of Aboriginal nations is a constraint, but its side effect is the creation of a legal space for them to express a self-determined, internal Aboriginality.

Internal strategies for self-determination take various forms. For example, “[Mudrooroo] Narogin’s radical conception of an ideology of Aboriginality is a tactic of resistance that can tackle the colonial mentality of the dominant literary formation” similar to Gayatri Spivak’s notion of strategic essentialism (Fielder 48). This is supported by an international 1972 United Nations report recognising that “identity must be self-identity and reject[ing] all forms of imposed definition. While it provides characteristics which may be present, it does not seek to establish an exhaustive or closed definition, but rather to establish the process whereby definitions must be reached” (Dodson, 2003a 31). This is achieved through the triple definition of Indigenous as 1) of Indigenous descent; 2) who feels Indigenous; and 3) who is endorsed by an Indigenous community (Allen 211). Essentialism has indeed been decried of late, following increased focus on alternative strategies including the acknowledgement of the constructed nature of identity. Thus, the call for papers for the 1988 biennial convention of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) stipulates that “describing Aboriginality as a cultural construction [is] not suggesting

that it is inauthentic. It refers to the ways in which Aborigines select from their experience and their cultural heritage to communicate a sense of identity to their young people” (Beckett 1). Indigenous identity is a fluid notion that cannot be policed and must be self-determined. The UN definition asserts that “recognition of a people’s fundamental right to self-determination [...] must include the right to *inherit* the collective identity of one’s people, and to *transform* that identity creatively” (Dodson, 2003a 31; my emphasis). Creativity and transformation do not equate with inauthenticity but with empowerment for Indigenous people.

Heiss offers a modern form of self-defined Aboriginality that simultaneously centres the Indigenous individual’s voice and claims a pan-Aboriginal heritage: “I am an urban, beachside Blackfella, a concrete Koori with Westfield Dreaming, and I apologise to no-one,” she writes in her memoir *Am I Black Enough for You?* (2012 1). Heiss is representative of young, urban Aboriginal women like many characters in this thesis: Sue Wilson, May Gibson, Tarena Shaw, and Sally Morgan. Heiss rejects the division between urban and remote Aboriginal identity by exposing the myth of “the so-called ‘real Aborigine’” and emphasising the process of identity-formation as counter-current and self-defined: “This is *my* story” (2012 2, original emphasis). Her Aboriginality realises the synthesis of self, close relations, and wider community by acknowledging race and socialisation as only two of the many factors of identity formation: “My identity is not simply about race: it’s about my family history, it’s about the history of Aboriginal Australia generally, it’s about the way I have been shaped as a human being since birth. It’s not about blood quantum or the colour of my skin” (Heiss, 2012 80). Yet the high-profile court case she and other fair-skinned Aboriginal people won in 2011 against conservative columnist Andrew Bolt for breach of Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975) testifies to the on-going struggle of Indigenous people under pressure of authenticity.⁴⁴

Mainstream white Australian society demands clear, “objective” criteria to determine who is Indigenous and what it means to be Indigenous, and the state has

⁴⁴ See the following press reports on the trial in *The Age Victoria* and *The Australian Business Review*: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/case-against-bolt-to-test-racial-identity-freespeech-limits-20100929-15xg8.html/> and <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/andrew-bolt-x-racial-vilification-court-case/story-e6frg996-1226148919092> (accessed 10 Nov. 2015).

long obliged it by establishing biological and cultural regulations. Biological criteria such as blood quantum exclude mixed-race people, who are sometimes called “‘ambiguous’ Aborigines” and whose biological make-up “must be properly understood as a product of assimilation colonialism” (I. Anderson 45). On the other hand, it is also reductionist to focus on “a contemporary Aboriginality defined purely as ‘cultural’ in ways that simultaneously mystified Aboriginal identities and reduced them to moral or political instrumentalities” (Grossman 4). As Dodson observes, both create negative conditions for Aboriginal self-determination: “[b]y defining Aboriginality in terms of purity of blood or purity of culture, the assimilation of those who did not fall within the narrow ambit of the definition could not even be considered cultural genocide, because the individuals were seen as not actually being Aboriginal” (2003a 34). Hence a paradox where the on-going presence of traditional Aboriginal communities in remote areas acts as a double-edged sword wielded by politicians, for those communities “simultaneously validate the cultural claims of aboriginal people, and call into question the status of those whose way of life differs from it” (Beckett 6). Used against their will as a yardstick against which to measure urban and fringe-dweller Aboriginality, remote traditional communities and their claim to authenticity are manipulated by the media to reinforce an association between Indigenous identity and deprivation (Heiss 2012 81).

Authentic or traditional Aboriginality is also a construct, Ian Anderson posits, but one that remains “a key figure in the imagination of White Australia: oppositional by definition (and not just different)” (45). Aboriginality is an oppositional culture in that it is constructed against an exclusive yet assimilationist white Australian culture. This opposition can be better understood using Delmos Jones and Jacqueline Hill-Burnett’s notion of ethnogenesis as “the process whereby a ‘common culture’ comes about and the manner by which it is defined” (216). Indeed “the oppositional practices of the process of ethnogenesis are produced within this structural relationship which draws attention to an essential feature of ethnogenesis – the regaining of control over the production of knowledge of one’s own cultural and political identity” (B. Morris 75). Self-definition is a crucial part of Aboriginal ethnogenesis reminiscent of the social model of disability, which “sees disability as *socially created*, or constructed on top of impairment, and is primarily concerned

with *the political project of emancipation* and, in some of its interpretations, with the development of an *oppositional politics of identity*” (Corker and Shakespeare 3; original emphasis). Here is the common ground on which Indigeneity and disability can meet and have the potential to empower one another through a joint oppositional discourse to dominant constructions of identity.

Like disability, Indigeneity is a form of relationality for it is a constant re-negotiation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, a Durkheimian “social *thing*” created by human behaviour (Langton, 2003 118; original emphasis). For Marcia Langton this means that Aboriginality “only has meaning when understood in terms of intersubjectivity, when both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal are subjects, not objects” (2003 118). If it is a social construct born of contact, then equal social and subjective power is required for a real “intercultural dialogue” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to take place (Langton, 1993 31). Defining Aboriginality as a relation, as Langton and Dodson do, complicates the possibility of a satisfactory definition to emerge, for “Indigenous peoples have rarely come into a genuine *relationship* with non-Indigenous peoples, because a relationship requires two, not just one and its mirror” (Dodson, 2003a 37; original emphasis). This would require a radical recasting of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships in modern day Australia.

The pressure and difficulty of fostering a sense of Indigenous pan-Māori identity is also present in Aotearoa, where Michael King explains that

[t]hroughout Maori history – before European contact and after – Maori society has presented a mottled pattern of sub-tribal, tribal and regional variations. If such phenomena as ‘Maori society’ or ‘the Maori’ ever come into existence, it would only be at some future time when urbanisation, detribalisation and some outside threat to identity thoroughly mixed and homogenised Maori ingredients. (5)

Urban Māori people often face the same charge of inauthenticity as urban Aboriginal people. Cherrington’s *The People-Faces* exemplifies the in-betweenness of mixed-race individuals who have little contact with their Indigenous culture, such as Nikki who feels like an outsider on the marae, unschooled in Māori ways by her mother and ignorant of te reo (Cherrington 11). Maka is upset at Nikki’s ignorance of Māori

culture and complains to the girl and to Zac's ghost: "Our daughter has taught her children nothing" (Cherrington 33-4). Pākehā knowledge amounts to "nothing" for the Māori if it is not accompanied by Indigenous knowledge (Cherrington 35).

When adult Nikki argues with the doctor for the right to check Joshua out to attend "matters of cultural significance," she is confused further by her perceived distance from her Māori heritage: "How am I going to explain this in a way that they are going to understand? I don't even understand it myself" (Cherrington 100). Bringing Joshua back to Te Kohinga is framed as a cultural imperative however, like Maka's decision to take him away from Hine 20 years earlier: "This has to be done. It is our way. You may have turned your back on your Maori culture, but this is the only way to put things right. [...] He belongs to us" (Cherrington 113-5). Although such imperatives can be said to constrain Indigenous people and limit their individual freedom, Nikki's reaction to seeing caged dolphins at Seaworld hints at a different interpretation: "Joshua didn't belong in this world either" (Cherrington 203). Joshua's distress in both Pākehā and Pākehā-influenced Māori settings mirrors the caged dolphin in that the ocean is still there but he has been severed from it against his will. Indigenous culture and identity have not disappeared – they have been transformed – and the external restrictions on the expression of culture and identity need to be torn down in order to enable Indigeneity. If, as Barker remarks, "*Potiki* displays productive and reciprocal connectivities between the politics of disability and of indigeneity," Grace's short story "Eben" as well as *The People-Faces* enact a similar dialogue and reveal a common ground between disability and Indigenous studies (2011 36).

2.2 Reader and Carer

2.2.1 The Reader as Diagnostician

The human brain is naturally geared towards recognising and making sense of patterns, including ascribing intentions to others' behaviour. It is therefore

inescapable for the reader to look for explanations in the text when it describes characters whose non-normative psyche is reflected by abstruse behavioural traits, at first hermetically sealed off from the interpretation of the characters and the readers. Murray calls diagnosis an investigative process of research and experimentation: “[i]n thinking through the business of writing on disability, it is an obvious suggestion that the job of the critical practitioner overlaps with that of his or her medical counterpart when it comes to an idea of diagnosis” (2008 17). That is to say, the critic and the diagnostician attempt to recognise medical conditions in the writer’s literary production.

Indigenous literatures raise an additional concern due to societal and medical bias in diagnosis related to patients’ ethnicities. As Ballard notes, “Māori children are more likely than Pākehā to be labelled ‘retarded’ and taken out of the mainstream” in schools (17). This problem is at the root of the diagnosis of Indigenous people and stems from historical prejudice and standard testing, which assumes the universality of intelligence and fails to take into account the influence of cultural and linguistic differences on cognition. One way to solve the issue of a (mostly) white readership checking an Indigenous character’s actions against a western medical epistemological framework can be found in a more dialogical situation, where white readers would listen to Indigenous characters narrating their disability in terms reminiscent of Rita Charon’s “narrative medicine.” If narrative is what joins people, then for Charon the meaning of a narrative “arises from and *is created by* the meeting between teller and listener. It follows that narrative acts build relationships as they convey information, emotion, and mood” (52; original emphasis). Narrative medicine is an intersubjective act that establishes a relation between teller and listener and creates meaning dialogically. What then of situations where the disabled character does not tell, or does not use a mode of communication understood by the listener/reader?

In Grace’s “Eben,” the reader is left to interpret the eponymous character’s physical and intellectual disability without hearing his voice. I read the collective conjecture of the rest of the characters as to whether he has a genetic birth defect, or suffered mistreatment, or an accident, as serving to shame the reader into recognising

and eschewing their initially prying attitude. The indeterminate “people” of the story do not accept Eben as he is, so they “made up all sorts of reasons as to how Eben became so out of proportion and malformed” (Grace, 2006 41). Craving understanding, some said that his mother was an unmarried girl who abandoned him inside a rocky crevice which deformed his head and body, some that it was a late abortion attempt, some that he was thrown off a train as a toddler, and others finally that he has no parents and is actually the devil himself. “People” favour any explanation, no matter how outlandish, over the acceptance of Eben’s unexplained nature, and their need for medical diagnosis for a condition they do not understand is telling of the human need to find a reason for unexpected and discordant behaviour and the medicalised approach to identity. Indeed, this attitude is one of the most frequently encountered and one of the most damaging for people suffering from mental disability and required by society to justify their difference with either a story of past trauma or a chemical imbalance in the brain. There is a marked difference, however, between attitudes towards mental illness and intellectual disability, and this is exemplified by the contrasting treatments of Eben and Joshua in *The People-Faces*.

Mental disability manifests itself in various forms, and is therefore often more difficult to diagnose than intellectual disability. Joshua could be suffering from depression for example, as his lethargy, risk-taking behaviour, paranoia, and suicide attempt seem to indicate. Since Cherrington is a Māori clinical psychologist herself, diagnosing her characters is a logical step to take. Early allusions to Joshua’s mental state appear from the first page of the novel when Nikki remarks that her boyfriend Tipene “thought that Joshua was weird” because of the latter’s lack of interaction (Cherrington 3). This initial diagnosis evolves as the narrative unfolds and Nikki qualifies Joshua’s monologues as “crazy talk. [...] Talking crazy. Yeah, crazy and stoned,” thus linking mental illness and drug taking (Cherrington 19). According to Nikki, Joshua “was real lazy sometime” while for cousin Alesha “he’s pretty depressed” and Joshua himself self-diagnoses as “the broken arse one here” showing how much diagnosis varies according to who speaks (Cherrington 28, 84, 96). The use of a term more commonly heard in the prison system (“broken arse”) participates in framing Joshua not as the master of his fate but as continually spoken for,

although his strength resides in his capacity for inertia, as Nikki remarks: “he’s one of the most stubborn shits I have ever known” (Cherrington 97). Nikki’s own views on drugs and medication evolve over time when she notices that Joshua’s “far-away stoned look isn’t too much different from the look he had in there. Just different drugs” (Cherrington 128). Finally, her interpretation veers towards the magical, with Joshua’s distress taking a threatening, contagious turn: “there is a darkness smothering him and – I think the darkness is taking me” (Cherrington 184). This is actually a throwback to young Nikki who called Maka the “bad witch who had put a spell over Joshua” in an attempt to understand and explain his difference (Cherrington 231).

In Cleven’s *Her Sister’s Eye*, on the other hand, the carer does not attempt to explain cognitive difference. Sofie appears to have a genetic intellectual disability, which the reader discovers when Archie meets her with her sister Murilla: “Archie sensed that Sofie was not the fully billy can of tea” (Cleven 5). Archie has an instinctive grasp of Sofie’s disability, perhaps because of his own brain damage. Murilla’s explanation for her sister’s difference is plain and straightforward: “*Sofie can’t help it. Get things messed up in her skull. Way she were birthed*” (Cleven 32; original emphasis). Sofie’s congenital disability means that her body grows but her mind does not, but this is not seen as a condition to be cured since it is her “way.” The cruellest diagnosis comes from the Red Rose ladies’ club (“retard”) and the white people of Mundra who associate Sofie’s disability with danger: “Mental age of a kid. Gives me the creeps that woman” (Cleven 91, 197). Their fear appears justified when Sofie gets into a fit of rage and destroys the television because a female character told a male character that she was pregnant and decided to abort the embryo (Cleven 63). Sofie’s lack of empathy and self-control exposes a dark streak at odds with the childlike aspects of her behaviour.

Archie himself suffers from amnesia, seizures, and epilepsy crises throughout the novel. Physically, he bears scars on his face and is the target of jibes such as “fucken freak, weirdo, scarface” (Cleven 11-12). It soon becomes apparent that Archie’s stuttering and fainting fits are linked with the burning pain of his scars, which hints at brain damage from a violent blow to the head, as we will see in a later

section. Caroline's mental disability is also acquired from bad treatment, but in her case it is due to a lifetime of abuse rather than a single assault. She is introduced to the reader by her son Donald who hires Archie as a gardener and warns him that his mother is "losing her bloody marbles" (Cleven 9). She is externally diagnosed with madness before the reader encounters her character and has a chance to form their own opinion. Caroline is an old woman who suffers from senility, paranoia, and memory loss. Her carer Murilla on the other hand diagnoses Caroline quite differently from Donald, pointing at the cause of her poor mental health as "[o]ld age and bad memories" (Cleven 17). Indeed, trauma forms the root of Caroline's mental disability.

The problematic conflation of the reader and the diagnostician is what Quayson calls "aesthetic nervousness," observable when "the dominant protocols of representation within the literary text are short-circuited in relation to disability" (15). The texts under study in this chapter are counter-narratives that evade the cure-or-kill imperative and reject dominant forms of representation. The withdrawal of diagnosis leaves blanks that readers are forced to fill on their own and generates a feeling of unease. Quayson adds that, "[f]or the reader, aesthetic nervousness overlaps social attitudes to disability that themselves often remain unexamined in their prejudices and biases" (15). The numerous and conflicting diagnoses of Joshua's condition, like the multiple reasons for Eben's disability, enjoin us as readers to face our own biases and attitudes to difference, and to ask ourselves where we fit on the spectrum and which interpretation among the many would be ours.

The very concept of mental and intellectual disability is strongly linked with world views and culture, as "[t]he holistic, group-oriented values of Māoridom, for instance, will result in a different perspective on intellectual disability than that gained from an individualistic Pākehā viewpoint" (Bevan-Brown 228). This raises the question of the reader/diagnostician being from a different culture to the character/patient, and especially in a position of privilege. Moreover, the identification of the reader with the disabled character is a problematic solution to aesthetic nervousness as it neglects the uniqueness of the character's experience. Trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra condemns identification and offers empathy as

an alternative: “[u]nproblematic identification [...] furthers victimization, including at times the constitution of the self as surrogate victim” (219). Empathy is an ethical solution insofar as it tries “to recapture the possibly split-off, affective dimension of the experience of others. Empathy may also be seen as counteracting victimization, including self-victimization” (LaCapra 40). LaCapra’s definition of empathy involves affect in order to feel the other’s pain while remaining aware that their pain and ours are clearly separate.

Responding ethically to the suffering of others thus “implies *not the appropriation of their experience* but [...] *empathic unsettlement*, which should have stylistic effects or, more broadly, effects in writing which cannot be reduced to formulas or rules of method” (LaCapra 41, my emphasis). Appropriation is a crucial issue in settler colonies where the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people hinges on the illegitimacy of the state fostering efforts by the settler population to indigenise their culture and replace existing native structures. Empathic “unsettlement” is therefore very aptly named when applied to the white reader and/or critic of Indigenous-authored texts. To circumvent identification, we must be wary of avoiding “the virtual experience involved in empathy giv[ing] way to vicarious victimhood” when “empathy with the victim seems to become an identity” (LaCapra 47). The disabled and/or traumatised individual retains their identity, which the empathically unsettled reader does not appropriate but accepts as different yet valid.

2.2.2 *The Carer as Cultural Custodian*

There is a stark contrast between the general population conjecturing and demanding reasons for disability, and the carers simply accepting the humanity of the carees. Relationships of care are established by the narratives in localised contexts and grounded in Indigenous “epistemology, values, and representational practices” (Barker, 2011 32). This is paradoxical in the case of Nikki, who starts off disconnected from her Indigenous heritage and an unwillingly caring for her brother Joshua, whose disability is closely linked to Māori spirituality. The narrative set in

the present (1997) echoes a passage set in the past (1977) when young Nikki is awoken by Joshua speaking in Māori in his sleep at night (although there is no mention of him learning the language) and crying out: “He was sick,” she tells their mother, thinking he was dying, but he falls silent and Nikki is beaten for lying (Cherrington 11). She takes on the role of carer very early on, even though on this occasion her mother, also distant from Māori traditions, punishes her for it. Growing up disappointed by Maka’s lies and favouritism, Nikki denies her cultural affiliation: “I was tired of trying to see things I couldn’t ever see anyway. I decided then that I wasn’t ever going to look anymore” (Cherrington 243).

It is only after dolphins, Maka’s kaitiaki, visit her in a dream that she attempts to reconnect with Māori traditions (Cherrington 46-7). Nikki’s matter-of-fact belief in kaitiaki, or guardian spirits, reveals her sensitivity to Māori spirituality despite her lack of formal training about customs, mythology, and te reo. Indeed, kaitiaki means “trustee, minder, guard, custodian, guardian, caregiver, keeper, steward.”⁴⁵ The definition also applies to Nikki’s caring role towards Joshua, and since his impairment is linked to being “the special one,” her role towards him expands to the Māori community as a whole (Cherrington 55). For Maka, the kaitiaki “watch over us. They come to us when we need them,” like Nikki who comes to Joshua when she feels his needs for her (Cherrington 160). Maka’s comment that “the dolphins no longer came in their physical form” represents Māori people’s increasingly abstract relationship with a disappearing cultural and spiritual world, which is nonetheless still present in immaterial form (Cherrington 162).

The obstacles Nikki faces in looking after Joshua are symptomatic of the difficulty for young Māori who were not raised in their traditional culture to take the responsibility to care for their cultural heritage. Caring for a person with a mental disability is challenging at the best of times, but when the patient is a close relative and their illness causes paranoia and aggressiveness towards their carer, it can be very onerous indeed. When Nikki visits him in hospital, Joshua blames her:

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&keywords=kaitiaki&search=> (accessed 15 Feb. 2015).

You rang them and told them lies about me. You told them to put me away. I know you did. You hate me Nikki. You've always hated me, because I'm the special one and you're not. [...] I know you. Maka always said I was special. I know when people are out to get me. You and Mum, you're both out to get me. You want to destroy me. (Cherrington 132)

We can read his attitude in several ways, from paranoia as a symptom of depression, to a superiority complex from being indoctrinated by Maka. He claims that voices talk to him about Hine and Nikki: "I see the darkness in everyone. The darkness in you Nikki. It's spewing out of you. Black pus is pissing out of your eyes" (Cherrington 133). The violence of his words hints at the possibility that Joshua deliberately harms his sister to drive her away; Nikki brings her love, but Joshua cannot accept it. He changes tactics to push Nikki away by mixing paranoia with insult, but the absurdity of his accusations exposes Joshua's paranoia as a pretext to justify his aggression through his own hurt, in a way not so dissimilar from the abusive men encountered in Chapter 1:

You put me in here because of my dope. Did you want you get a hold of my patch ay? Make some money? [...] Would you just fuck off? Yeah, you should look scared Nikki, you should be. Yeah, fuck off, that's right, close the door behind you Nikki, I don't want to see your ugly face in here again! (Cherrington 133)

Nikki's feeling of helplessness exemplifies how demanding it is for family members to be carers because of their deep emotional involvement: "Now all I had were my words. But they didn't work either. Joshua would do exactly what he wanted to do. No matter what. And shit, I was only figuring that out now. Right at this moment" (Cherrington 130). She is an ineffective carer because she does not really know her brother, and instead tries to make him fit into her idea of a career.

After she checks him out of hospital, Joshua keeps dismissing Nikki's feelings but her reaction reveals a shift in their relationship:

"You don't know, Nikki." He says to me. I stop reversing a stare at him. The pounamu patu [greenstone club] slices past my face. I see the deft twirl of the hand and dark brown eyes that pukana back at him. The patu remains raised in the air, ready. Neither do you, I think. You don't know what it's like to see someone you love with all your heart fucking it up again and again and again. This time, my patu is controlled as it flicks

through the air, past his face. “Tell me, Joshua,” I say, my cold eyes, my angry puku [stomach], my sad heart. “Tell me exactly what it is that I don’t know.” Joshua is indifferent. He does not fear my patu. Again the patu cuts through the air and still Joshua does not reply. (Cherrington 131)

In this passage, Nikki uses more words of te reo than in the rest of the novel, which shows that despite the fact that she is getting closer to traditional culture Joshua remains unattainable to her and her virtual pounamu patu, or Māori ceremonial weapon. Cherrington suggests that Koro Zac suffered from a condition similar to Joshua’s, including depressive states and psychotic episodes (178). After the death of Opo, a dolphin that beached itself near Te Kohinga, Maka observes: “I think your grandfather had become very sad. And I should have seen it coming. He had done it before” (Cherrington 175). This alludes to the possibility of a cultural disease linked with the disappearance of Māori culture and spirituality, instead of mental disability. As his wife and carer, Maka try to support Zac and protect him, and so Nikki attempts the same with Joshua, although a different kind of affection links siblings and spouses, and men’s potential for violence makes it more challenging for women to be the carers of men.

The danger of difference is a common theme in literature about disability, and in Grace’s “Eben” this begins during the protagonist’s infancy when other children in the park “set out to torment him because there was an element of danger in doing so which excited them” like “prodding a bull” (2006 51). The fascination for abnormality blinds them to the fact that the real danger is the one they, the “normal” children, pose to Eben. Thankfully, his carer Pani “had a knack for persuading kids out of cruelty,” for like Grace’s own writing Pani is profoundly human and recognises others’ humanity (2006 51). After a while, the neighbours “realised that this deformed kid with nothing in his top story was always under the watchful eye of Pani, and so was harmless,” and even though Pani works nights and leaves him alone at home while he sleeps, Eben is eventually accepted by the community despite widely held prejudices against disabled people (Grace, 2006 50). The notion of danger returns after Pani’s death when Eben is released from the medical facility. He starts busking on the streets with his portable radio, since he loves singing and dancing, and “[w]hile many hurried by, amused or embarrassed, and some

commented that this was what happened when loonies were let loose all over the place and the next thing you knew you could be pulled into a doorway and strangled, there were plenty who remembered Eben from years back” (Grace, 2006 55). “Some” associate disability with danger, but “plenty” know and accept him for who he is. In Grace’s story, it is through regular contact with difference that people question their prejudices and learn acceptance.

Acceptance is complicated by the prevalence of ablenationalist discourse in settler societies. Snyder and Mitchell’s coinage, modelled on Jasbir Puar’s homonationalism, refers to “the degree to which treating people with disabilities as an exception valorizes able-bodied norms of inclusion as the naturalized qualification of citizenship” (Snyder and Mitchell, 2010 113). I would add abled-minded to able-bodied in order to highlight the fact that the social exclusion of mentally and intellectually disabled people is accompanied by a need to qualify them as different in order to reassert the neurotypical majority’s claim to normalcy. Hence the use of ableist slurs such as “mad,” “crazy,” “idiotic,” and many more, which most of us use in order to distance ourselves from an action or word we find unacceptable. At state level, this exclusion translates into the forced committal and mass internment of disabled people in (often inadequate) facilities separated from civil society. Indeed, “[a]blenationalism involves the implicit assumption that minimum levels of corporeal, intellectual, and sensory capacity, in conjunction with subjective aspects of aesthetic appearance, are required of citizens seeking to access the ‘full benefits’ of citizenship” (Snyder and Mitchell, 2010 124). Laws curtailing disabled people’s freedom and independence fall into the category of ablenationalist structures and participate in maintaining an ableist society in place, thus delaying the acceptance of difference. If, as Barker states, “[c]ultural health’ is understood in terms of a society’s ability to accommodate and nurture the diverse needs of its members rather than an absence of illness or disability,” then most western countries, including Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, are very sick indeed (Barker, 2011 50).

Reading the corpus in terms of cultural custodianship runs the risk of metaphorisation, which we will explore in the next section, but can also yield productive interpretations. In *Her Sister’s Eye*, Aboriginal woman Murilla is

employed as carer to elderly white woman Caroline. Caroline's late abusive husband Reginald used to tell people about his wife: "She's much like a child. That's why the Salte woman's here," while Murilla herself calls Caroline "the oldest kid in the world" (Cleven 117, 43). Although Reginald's remark is meant to silence and discredit Caroline's voice, the child metaphor takes on a new meaning if we think of the carer as cultural custodian, for the white culture is posited here the younger one ("a child") and cared for by Indigenous people, in a reversal of the anthropological aim of recording "dying" cultures and "curating" them (Thomas 6-7).

As we have seen with Nikki, Pani, and Murilla, in conventional views of care the "burden" falls squarely on female relatives, whether the patients are male like Eben and Joshua, or female like Sofie and Caroline (Aldred, Crowley and Rupal 2). Murray defines the standard expectation of care in the family in the case of autism as a total commitment:

conceived of as a project of 'work;' the rejection of a life outside of dealing with the condition; the consolidation of the idea of the family unit as a caring whole that can combat autism; and the spiritual sense of a 'blessing,' which allows for the discovery of a love that extends beyond autism to regenerate all those who are willing to open themselves to it. (2008 194)

This conception highlights sacrifice and redemption for the carer, which are not present in the texts under scrutiny in this chapter. It also upholds the nuclear family, and the parents especially, as central to the care of the disabled individual. The reality is different in Indigenous texts where the emphasis is on communal ownership and group responsibility. When Nikki considers having Joshua readmitted into hospital because "He's not all right," cousin Mereana disagrees: "you did the right thing bringing him back here. But you didn't bring him back just to take him to another loony bin! The whanau, they won't like it" (Cherrington 227). The whānau is the ultimate decision-making body in the Māori world; it is composed of relatives and, in the case of Rewi, close family friends with no blood ties. Although raised in Māori culture, Mereana contradicts herself on the subject of Joshua: "He's a big boy and he can look after himself," she states, yet where he lives and who cares for him is a matter for the whānau to decide (Cherrington 187). Mereana appears disingenuous when she adds that "Joshua has never needed anyone. He's always done his own

thing, just like Koro” (Cherrington 188). The ambiguity resides in the fact that both men hurt their close Māori family members and do not fit into New Zealand society, so the solution remains for them to change and adjust to external forces, or for family and society to adjust and make space for their non-normative cognitive identities.

2.2.3 *Metaphor and its Discontents*

Reading the carer as simultaneously an Indigenous individual and a cultural custodian, and therefore the disabled individual as standing in for Indigenous culture, runs the double risk of ignoring or concealing the lived experiences of disabled people and their carers, and of perpetuating the colonial ableist myth of the primitive as an impaired version of modern, western man. The metaphor of disability in postcolonial discourse may either stand for postcolonialism, as when a character’s impaired body is used to signify the nation’s fragmented society, or postcolonialism can be used to stand for disability, conflating the experience of ethnic minority and disability. This is what Michael Davidson denounces when he decries a rhetoric of globalisation “suffused with references to physical impairment – countries suffer from *crippling* debt; national leaders who are *deaf* to the needs of their people; poverty as a *cancer* spreading throughout a region” (168; original emphasis). Most critics are scathing of both types of metaphorisation, in line with Mark Sherry’s statement that “postcolonialism should not be understood as simply a metaphor for the experiences of disability” and Shari Thurber’s assertion that the “metaphoric use of disability [...] is in fact a most blatant and pernicious form of stereotyping” (10; 12). Their position contrasts that of Arthur Frank who, in his foundational text in literary disability studies *The Wounded Storyteller*, “likens medical patients to colonized peoples: the former’s bodies have been rationally conquered and their indigenous experience of illness or disability has been haughtily disregarded” (Savarese and Zunshine 18). Despite the potential for alliance against oppression, Frank risks appropriating both groups’ experience through metaphor and eventually weakening their claims to reparation and institutional change.

The most frequent type of metaphorisation uses the image of disability to signify something other “as an opportunistic metaphoric device” (Mitchell, 2002 15). The sheer excess of disability representations in literature makes disability ubiquitous in texts written by non-disabled authors, who often handle disabled characters like impersonal concepts instead of human beings. Mitchell adds that disability often “serves as a metaphoric signifier of social and individual collapse” (2002 16). A consequence of this is the persistent association of disability with tragedy, sacrifice, and redemption. Here lies a major difference between western and postcolonial texts, as Murray remarks: “[t]he link between disability and culture is central to many fictions, of course, but it is intriguing to speculate why the connection in a number of postcolonial texts lacks the overt sentimentality and moralizing that is found in other examples” (2008 83). Indeed, for their Indigenous family, the disabled characters in the primary texts are accepted in a matter-of-fact way, except by Nikki who as we have seen earlier is disconnected from her cultural heritage.⁴⁶ Culturally distinct ways of dealing with difference logically lead to diverse representational techniques, and thus to different literary outcomes. Murray’s criticism of literary representations of disability, for example when “the disabled figure is again a cipher, an overwritten character providing a twist to the story line,” is challenged in Indigenous-authored texts where the readability of bodies and minds is several times removed from the often white, able reader (2008 83). In these texts, the disabled figure tends to be an individual with a rich internal life that the reader cannot access, and the authors enjoin us to accept the impossibility to use the characters as ciphers to project our own anxieties and hopes onto. Resisting metaphor means refusing to be explained away and to accept the imposition of a hegemonic meaning through which “nondisabled individuals [have] historically defin[ed] themselves as normal by using disability as a universal metaphor for abnormality,” reinforcing the exclusion of disabled people (S. Fox 405).

If postcolonial narratives in general avoid using disability as a metaphor, they tend to metaphorise postcolonialism more freely. Works of fiction reflect the conflicting view of metaphor among critics, which Barker sums up when she points

⁴⁶ Murray also remarks on the links between cognitive exceptionality and the increasingly ubiquitous use of metaphor in literary representation (2008 10).

out that “postcolonial critical readers often valorize metaphor for its capacity to establish connections between divergent experiences and to draw attention to oppressive social and political practices, whereas the disability community accentuates the alienating or stigmatizing effects of metaphorical representation” (2011 15). She advocates for a more balanced view of metaphor, arguing that “vilifying disability metaphors across the board only serves to entrench disability as a form of difference that requires singular treatment” (Barker, 2011 20). Indeed the wholesale rejection of metaphor can undermine calls for equal treatment and acceptance of difference. For Barker, postcolonial fiction writers tend to address metaphor productively, as “the permutations of figurative language regarding postcolonial ‘damage’ are manifold, and these alternative disability metaphors – as well as the material realities they allude to – provide both resources and challenges to fiction writers” (2011 193). Indigenous authors such as Grace have written disabled characters who can be read as metaphors (Toko, Mary, and Eben for example) but reject the conventional use of disability in western fiction.

If Indigenous texts “use the suggestion of cognitive impairment as part of their outlining of the dynamics of postcolonial societies and cultures,” then a postcolonial disability literary analysis can yield mutually beneficial results for both disciplines (Murray, 2008 82). According to Barker, postcolonial and disability criticism can find common ground and metaphor can be used to advance their interests. Indeed, she states, “[m]etaphor can enhance awareness that disability is a complex, resonant human condition, and is frequently used to establish empathetic connections between characters, communities and readers – an effect that is especially important when narrating the stories of mass disablement and/or collective trauma that often occur in postcolonial narratives” (Barker, 2011 20). The aim is consciousness-raising instead of cathartic, collective instead of individual, and its effect on the reader differs from the narratives condemned above because of their concern with avoiding voyeurism, “feel-good” or cathartic pity, and the cure-or-kill imperative associated with eugenics (Snyder 2002, 181).

2.2.4 Duplicity and Interdependence

Carers and carees can be said to represent twinned forces within all of us, hence the image of a binary where both parts are linked like the two hemispheres of a brain. Since carees and carers are adults in the selected primary texts, the idea of the double is more prominent than in narratives about disabled children. The relationship is especially strong in the case of siblings like Sofie and Murilla or Joshua and Nikki. The formers' bond is physical and intimate: like in Cleven's previous novel *Bitin' Back*, a sexually aggressive white man is mocked by a strong Aboriginal woman and vows to exact revenge. In this case Donald rapes Murilla's sister Sofie in a twisted sexual projection that aims at hurting someone Murilla loves (showing her that she fails her role as protector) as well as raping her by proxy. In Archie's words: "[t]he dead man with the strange eyes has kept his promise to Murilla: he does get her back in the end. Leaves her with a lifetime of sorrow" (Cleven 102). Fiona Kumari Campbell's remark, after John Locke, that "the edges of the somatic are not necessarily equated with boundaries of subjectivity," can be applied to this situation and the two women's porous bodies and subjectivities (174).

Kumari Campbell's work on conjoined twins and double psyche can also be useful to think about the carer mirroring the caree. Indeed, conjoinment entails "the seismic rearrangement of self-in-relation," which is present in non-twin siblings to a certain degree (174). I argue that this rearrangement is on-going and never fixed, as the mirrors become more or less distorting in order to align or shift the reflected images. When she takes Joshua with her, Maka tells young Nikki the story of a separated brother and sister who see each other's reflection in a well: "When the sister stared into the water she saw her brother's reflection. It was a vision. [...] When he looked into the puna [well] he too saw a vision of his sister" (Cherrington 213). Nikki's closeness to her brother leads her to believe Maka at first although she never sees his reflection. Nikki's gullibility may be ascribed to her youth, but it also illustrates her belief that she and Joshua may not share a body, but nothing prevents them from sharing a sibling-based identity and a single subjectivity as their faces map onto one another in the water (Cherrington 174). Theirs is a figurative conjoinment until Maka separates them.

The grandmother's failure to teach Joshua to protect himself makes Nikki his protector, and arguably the real protagonist of the novel as she finds an identity through her role as carer. Beside, for Nikki their fraternal bond is stronger than any cultural imperative, and although Maka and Hine fail to recognise her caring role towards her brother at first, when he locks himself in the bathroom and slashes his wrists, it is Nikki who climbs through the window and saves his life, thus cementing her role as carer (Cherrington 53). Looking at Joshua and Nikki as mirror images of one another, we can read in a new light the obstacles to caring the latter encounters, especially Joshua's insults and his hurtful behaviour towards his sister (Cherrington 84). Joshua's attitude can be read as self-loathing in the mirror model of figurative conjoinment, since "in today's environment conjoined twins represent an affront to scientific ableism which views human duality as pathological," and their internal duality is therefore struggling for acceptance (Kumari Campbell 175). Nikki finds her new cultural role and identity when she reaches the marae with Joshua and gets up to kōrero: "I am not a kaikaranga of the dolphins," she realises, "I am the kaikorero. The next storyteller" (Cherrington 259). Nikki is the double who tells Joshua's and her community's stories.

Before reaching this level of fusion with her caree/brother/culture, she must first withstand fragmentation. When Nikki visits Joshua at the hospital, he has "dead eyes," empty mirrors of an absent soul, as he "blinks at me again. Past me. Through me" (Cherrington 95). Since he is not really there, Nikki is absent too, for their roles are complementary and they cannot exist without one another. A similar internal division can be present on the scale of the individual, as in Cleven's *Her Sister's Eye*: when Archie remembers his past, his "body is out of control" (Cleven 210). He is literally de-membering and re-membering, alternatively losing and retrieving control of his own body and his own identity. Born Raymond Gee, he suffered a head trauma as a child and took the name of his deceased friend, "[a]t some point he became Archie Corella, and Raymond Gee became someone he didn't know, Raymond Gee didn't exist" (Cleven 215). Archie/Raymond contains multitudes, namely the twinned subjectivities of a dead boy and a boy who should be dead. His dreams try to steer him towards remembering who he is when he returns to Mundra

“but he couldn’t see those things,” as if the body that betrayed him through injury was resistant to the truth (Cleven 215).

People are not what they seem in *Mundra*, and the discrepancy between physical and internal being is nowhere as salient as in the case of Sofie, whom Archie calls a “woman-child” (131). Sofie is simultaneously woman and child (fusion), but also a child’s mind in a woman’s body (fragmentation). Murilla hears about the rape after Donald’s death, and this belated disclosure acts as a reminder of the particular vulnerability of intellectually disabled women to sexual abuse (Fawcett 79). Sofie does not tell anyone, not even her sister, intuitively aware that her gender, ethnicity, and disability would conspire to make her appear an unreliable victim, and that she would not get justice unless she enacts it herself. In her own child-like voice and with impressive clarity of mind, she recounts Donald’s assault, how she plotted her revenge, indicts a sexist society powerless to defend women and girls, and finally discloses how she drowned Donald in the river. She sees her actions as justice, “*he done with hurtin black girls white girls*,” she says, as she punishes him on behalf of his other victims regardless of race and takes on the role of champion for all women (Cleven 60).

Indeed, in relationships of care it is not infrequent for a reversal of roles to occur and for the caree to look after for the carer. Thus Sofie looks after Caroline, and Caroline looks after Sofie as she knows how to act like an adult with her, all the while acting like a child with Murilla (Cleven 126). Frank points out that, “[a]s wounded, people may be cared for, but as storytellers, they care for others” (xii). Both carers and carees in the texts under study in this chapter are wounded storytellers, and “[b]ecause stories can heal, the wounded healer and wounded storyteller are not separate, but are different aspects of the same figure” (Frank xii). The binary present in relationships of care is also reflected by the internal duplicity of Indigenous female characters, who act as double wounded storytellers writing for collective cultural healing.

The caree taking up a caring role raises the question of independence versus interdependence. It is an issue Grace has engaged with in the past via *Potiki*, a novel figuring the integration of the disabled child as a productive member of the

community. Barker reminds us that “Toko is not simply a recipient of care but is also a caregiver, demonstrating the transformative implications of an interdependent society for notions of work and care” (2011 46). Like Sofie, he is both looked after and looks after others, and his worth as a member of an Indigenous community does not hinge on his conforming to settler society’s ideal of normalcy or being productive in the capitalist sense of monetised labour. Although some disability activists “insist that disabled women and men ‘care for’ too and highlight interrelationships and interdependency,” many in the western world still advocate for independence as the ideal model, and thus “ignore or undervalue relationships of dependency or interdependence” (Fawcett 41; Wendell 145). In relation to disability, members of various Māori communities mention “the oppressive effects of segregation and the liberating experience of integration and inclusion” as opposed to isolation and independence, adding that “all of us are *interdependent* in families, whanau and community” (Ballard 12, 21; original emphasis). This is the core tenet of this chapter: we cannot separate disabled people and the non-disabled (and disabled) people who care for them since they represent a core locus of intersubjectivity in Indigenous literature.

Barker argues that “indigenous fictional texts such as *Potiki* – which places interdependence firmly at the centre of its disability narrative – can provide imaginative assistance in rethinking the relationships between individual, disability and community” (2011 41). Relationships are central to the creation of a new model of disability that, contrary to the medical and social model, would be able to take into account cultural specificities. This is the “cultural model” which appears in Cherrington and Grace’s work: “a Maoricentric conception of disability studies based on cultural values of social integration and communal interdependence” (Barker, 2011 27). The development of such a model goes hand-in-hand with a recent change in the literary representation of disability noticed by Snyder and Mitchell: “[i]solation and excessive idiosyncrasy were the bane of disabled people’s representational lives, and social realism pushed for the necessity of a relational or social model” (2000 23). A cultural relational model would provide scholars and activists with a framework to argue the importance of relationships and interdependence. There are external obstacles to this model however, not least of

them the situation of social and economic dependency in which disabled and Indigenous people are often placed. B. Morris defines welfare colonialism as “a process of domination sustained by relations of dependency” (64; Paine, 1977 12). This is particularly relevant in settler nations, where weapons colonialism has mostly ceded its place to welfare colonialism: the government give money to Indigenous communities but controls very tightly how it is spent, thus fostering structural dependency and welfare colonialism.

The community, and especially the extended family, is central to relationships of care since it provides support for the carer and the caree, as well as the socio-cultural context in which the duplicity mentioned earlier operates. In *The People-Faces*, community approval is crucial to Nikki’s recognition of her caring role towards Joshua and Māori culture in general, as Rewi commends her explicitly: “You did the right thing, girl. Bringing him here. [...] That was your job girl” (Cherrington 186). Nikki’s “job” is to keep bringing Joshua home when he strays, be it into the sea or a Pākehā hospital, for she is his anchor into the Māori world. As a carer, she also has responsibilities towards the Pākehā medical system, meaning that she sometimes has to make decisions that feel counterintuitive to her caree, such as forcing him to take his medication despite his protests and protecting him against himself (Cherrington 187). At once twins and opposites, Nikki and Joshua remain irreconcilable despite the former’s efforts, and, as she foreshadows it when she takes Joshua home in “[t]he continuing conflict of the opposed realms,” this conflict lies unresolved in the epilogue as Joshua is back into formal care (Cherrington 258). We can wonder at the reason for such pessimism on the part of the author, and may find it in the tension between representations of disability and Indigeneity. In a prosthetic reading, the disabled body “*means* more than a normative body but, due to its ‘deficiency,’ this meaning excludes the notions of personhood or agency ascribed to nondisabled characters” (Barker, 2011 51; original emphasis). I will now turn to disability defined as impairment or lack, and Indigeneity defined as additive identity, or excess.

2.3 Lack and Excess

2.3.1 *Intersections of Disability and Indigeneity*

The first steps towards tackling injustice are the acknowledgement of difference and the recognition of the rights of the oppressed population. Ballard argues that it applies to disabled people since “[t]hey are a minority group experiencing disempowerment and oppression at the hands of the majority” (21). Like Indigenous people, disabled people live in environments and societies designed by and for the dominant group. This begs the question: is this condition compounded for disabled Indigenous people? For Mitchell, the main difference between literary representations of disability and ethnicity is the fact that, “[w]hile racial, sexual, and ethnic criticisms have often founded their critiques on the pervasive absence of their experiences in the dominant culture’s literature, images of disability abound in literary history” (2002 19). This establishes disability as an almost too visible, and therefore “already colonised,” area of representation. The work of the author is to bring representations of Indigeneity to the fore and to rectify inaccurate representations of disability.

The exclusion of deviance is not new to the modern era, however for Quayson it has expanded from physical and mental difference to ethnic difference: “[t]he colonial encounter and the series of migrations that it triggered in its wake served to displace the discourse of disability onto a discourse of otherness that was correlated to racial difference” (10). The historical link between disability and race is further complicated by the fact that, in capitalist societies, those receiving support from the state are often framed as “parasitical,” including disabled and Indigenous people (Snyder and Mitchell, 2006 46; Barker, 2011 54). As Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o explains, however, colonial relations themselves are of a parasitical nature, for “[a] parasite grows, feeds, and shelters in a different organism, the host. It gets everything from the host and gives it nothing” (2012 27). Sofie in *Her Sister’s Eye* remembers Murilla’s white ex-partner Andrew: “*he take all our money n grog up n when the sun runs away he come home yelling. Names he call Dove [Sofie] n sister – black bitches, sluts. A feed, he be shoutin*” (Cleven 136; original emphasis). Andrew is the paragon of the sexist, white supremacist parasite who colonises Indigenous women’s

house and body, and exploits their labour. Representations of intellectually disabled characters such as Sophie are not new but, as we established earlier, in most narratives disability is presented as an obstacle to overcome in order to enter mainstream society (perceived as ideal).

This is complicated by the fact that literary representations are built in language and that language lacks crucial terms to cover non-normative reality. Traditionally, the dominant population has controlled language through almost exclusive access to media and formal education systems, consequently language reflects established power structures. One of the difficulties in writing this chapter is the absence of a word for “caree,” with only the too-formal “patient” or unwieldy periphrases such as “person who receives care.” The latter is unsatisfactory because it separates care from the caree’s identity, and presents the need for care, that is disability itself, as a lack in the person’s identity that is fixed through care. This is not only true of the English language, as Bevan-Brown remarks in her interviews of Māori carers:

The words “pōrangi” and “wairangi” were discussed but their meanings were not the same as “intellectual disability.” People remembered stories that revealed a wide variety of attitudes, ranging from the “intellectually disabled” being revered as taonga [treasure], being shunned, being accepted with amusement and being valued as an integral part of the community. (207)

There is no word in te reo for intellectual disability such as learning difficulties, and whether this reveals cultural attitudes to cognitive difference is anyone’s guess, but in a sociolinguistics framework words are created and adapted organically to suit a society’s needs, consequently the absence of a word suggests either the absence of the notion attached to it in the culture, or the absence of need to categorise it. The Maori Dictionary Online defines porangi as “to search for, seek” as well as to “be insane, mad, crazy, mentally ill, deranged, beside oneself, headstrong, hurried, stupid.”⁴⁷ The term is not restricted to medical conditions, and neither does it represent a necessarily permanent state of loss or lack.

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&keywords=porangi&search=> (accessed 15 Feb. 2015).

Disability is often evoked as impairment, in other words something that is missing, as well as “something that someone ‘has’” (Savarese and Zunshine 33; Ballard 11). The tension between lack and excess is the third binary to guide our reflection in this chapter. Ballard notes that in the “‘sickness’ or ‘medical’ model of disability [...] people are labelled as damaged or inadequate and are subsequently viewed almost exclusively in terms of their ‘problems’ or ‘deficits’” (18). Like disabled characters in most fiction written by non-disabled authors, disabled people in mainstream social and media discourses are outlined as cyphers characterised by their lack and whose illness is metonymic for the self. This depiction presupposes a neurological norm against which disabled individuals are measured and found wanting in a way that connects with the contemporary moment: “Western societies are now, in various ways, said to be ‘post-industrial,’ post-Fordist, ‘postmodern,’ even ‘post-historical’ and ‘post-human.’ All these terms identify themselves with what they are not” (Corker and Shakespeare 1). Society has lost the ability to define itself in positive terms, and even national identities are constructed in opposition to each other.

As a result, mixed-race ethnicity is considered non-normative and subversive, and like disability it is framed negatively as loss or absence. Steven Webster remarks that “Maori culture is not something that has been lost, it is the loss; being ‘a Maori’ is struggling to be a Maori” (1993, 228). Māori identity is built on this loss, and it is also true of the pan-Aboriginal identity of post-Invasion Australia. In both contexts, “discourses of the ‘dying race’ and the ‘inauthenticity’ of contemporary [Indigenous culture] contribute to anxiety-ridden notions of the intangibility of ‘pure, authentic’ culture, which consequently becomes a culture of lack that is ‘deficiently itself’” (Barker, 2011 51). Barker’s statement sets the stage for the development of an oppositional culture within the vacuum created by the discourse of lack and loss. The term “oppositional culture” is defined by Gillian Cowlshaw as “the active creation and protection of this arena of social meaning in an embattled situation,” and contemporary Indigenous culture is indeed a sphere of political struggle where opposite forces exert competing pressures (1988 97, 103).

Sally Weaver establishes a distinction between private and public ethnicity that is useful to think about disability in a similarly polarised way. She separates private (self-determined, lived experience) and public (symbolic, constructed via relations between people and the state) ethnicities as performed by Indigenous people in settler countries: “private ethnicity [is] practiced by groups or networks of aboriginal minority members in their daily lives” while “public ethnicity [is] part of the *political culture* of the nation-state [...] determined in the public arena of *relations between* the nation-state and the aboriginal minorities” (184, 186; original emphasis). The first is intrinsic and constructed in relationships among Indigenous people themselves while the second is an extrinsic construction resulting from the relationship between Indigenous people and the state. As with ablenationalism, modern states conceive national identity in opposition to deviant and non-normative behaviours such as mental and intellectual disability. Like disabled people, Indigenous people have specific needs related to their history and social status, and demand what S. Weaver calls “unconventional policy paradigms [...] because these paradigms affirm their unique ethnicity, the essence of which *is* their relationship with the nation-state” (209; original emphasis). Thinking about disability and Indigenous ethnicity and identity as relationships allows us to consider the possibility of a modern collective identity drawing on traditional Indigenous concepts. Thus J. Weaver remarks that “[n]atives tend to see themselves in terms of ‘self in society’ rather than ‘self and society.’ It is an ‘enlarged sense of self’” (227). Indigenous identity is therefore a we-identity where, as Tuhiwai Smith puts it for the Māori, “to be connected is to be whole” (1999, 148). To be connected is to be, and readjusting one’s connections with the nation-state on their own terms is a major challenge but also a potentially constructive and empowering act for disabled and Indigenous people.

2.3.2 Gender and Madness

Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilisation* traces the history of madness as a form of scapegoating that succeeded leprosy in the western world and as a social ailment before it was qualified as medical fact (1-2). Quayson goes further to show how, “[e]ven as there appeared to be a variegated response to physical disabilities, madness, on the other hand, was consistently viewed throughout the Middle Ages and even into the Renaissance period as a form of divine punishment” linking “madness, divine retribution, and demoniacal possession” in specifically gendered and sexualised terms (8-9). This is reflected throughout the western literary canon, with accusations of madness repeatedly used to silence female voices from medieval witch burning to Sigmund Freud’s discussion of hysteria, or womb-disease.

In the postcolonial world, the establishment of western health institutions such as hospitals participated in exporting a gendered medical model to the entire world. In India, for example, Veena Das and Renu Addlakha’s study of disability, gender, and citizenship reveals how, in the case of female patients, “the voice of the ‘defective’ woman emerges framed by a diagnosis of madness – an uncanny illustration of a failure to live up to norms of femininity being glossed as defect” (138). The woman in question is brought to the hospital by her family-in-law for wearing men’s clothes and neglecting housework, both symptoms of deviance and madness in their opinion. The woman, on the other hand, accuses her husband and in-laws of beating her but, already labelled as a psychiatric patient, her protests cause her disservice: “[t]he more she transgressed, the more easily her words could be completely denied” (Das and Addlakha 141).

This is reminiscent of the conspiracy between Caroline’s husband Reginald and their son Donald in *Her Sister’s Eye*, who undermine and manipulate her. At a dinner party for instance, Reginald tells their guests that Caroline is sick, then he trips Murilla over so she spills soup on his wife while Donald calls his mother “[b]loody hopeless” and Reginald insist that “her mind is playing up” (Cleven 116). The men set the scene to foreclose any possibility of an alliance between Caroline and the guests: the more she argues, the more evidence they claim to have of her instability, and the easier it is for them to isolate her, a form of manipulation common to domestic abusers as the effect of isolation makes it more difficult to

detect and tackle abuse, especially when the victim's voice is passed off as "mad." Murilla attempts to support Caroline by telling her "They're doing something to you. Trying to make out you're mad. [...] You ain't mad. You know that, don't ya?" (Cleven 116). On the other hand, she associates Reginald's violence with him being the real "*lunatic*": "It was because Reginald Drysdale was a madman" (Cleven 111-112; original emphasis). Reginald is the cause of Caroline's trauma and mental disability. It is also worth noting that Murilla is the only carer in Caroline's life. The lack of medical care testifies to the failure of Australian mental health professionals and the absence of adequate care for victims and survivors of male violence. This is in line with feminist criticism of the medical model where women are either ignored or "infantalized [sic] and disempowered in mental health services and institutions" (Aldred, Crowley and Rupal 4). The fact that Caroline is on medication means that she sees a GP at the very least, and yet she is not in therapy and there is no mention of her carer Murilla having any training in dealing with trauma victims or mentally disabled patients.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their seminal study of 19th century women's writing *The Madwoman in the Attic* discuss the attraction of madness for women writers as conjuring the madwoman to "come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be" (78). The figure of the madwoman emerges as both the extreme of the female experience that does not conform to socially dictated and policed gender roles, but also as the spectre of female difference, presented to women as something to avoid at all cost as well as a punishment that may be bestowed upon them should they deviate from this model of femininity. These double pressures participate in the fragmentation of the female psyche, quartered between contradictory pressures and held to impossible standards. The burden on women is nowhere more noticeable than in the areas of sex and motherhood, notably in the case of Eben's birth mother in Grace's story. A teenager ostracised by her family when she falls pregnant, she gives birth in a home for unmarried mothers where she abandons the deformed baby: "The girl was traumatised by what she had been through during the birth of her baby and horrified by the sight of what had been yanked out of her, but she understood that it was all a

punishment for her sins” (Grace, 2006 44). She is described as too young to have consensual sexual intercourse, and therefore a likely victim of rape; suffers isolation and loss of means when her family turns against her; faces the humiliation of the homes for “fallen women” and the pain of pregnancy and childbirth; the guilt of believing that her child was born deformed to punish her even further; and finally the suffering of abandoning her baby. All of those traumatic and contradictory experiences are sadly familiar for many women.

Caroline’s trauma causes paranoia and hypochondria, also classified as mental illnesses (Cleven 42). We can therefore interpret her murder of her husband by switching his heart medication as an act of madness aiming at reclaiming her sanity by eliminating the cause of her trauma (Cleven 189). Medication sabotage, like poison, has been women’s favoured assassination method, since their physical violence is less socially accepted than men’s. The murder marks a turning point in Murilla’s assessment of Caroline’s sanity however: “she knew she was looking at a seriously desperate woman. It chilled her blood” (Cleven 190). Here the links between *Her Sister’s Eye* and Cleven’s previous novel *Bitin’ Back* are striking in terms of the intersection of male violence and female madness among Aboriginal people living in small white country towns, and beckon a more thorough exploration of this topic in line with Snyder and Mitchell’s remarks that “scholarship has begun to show an interest in the transgressive potential of ‘madness’ as a shared fascination for literature and medicine alike” (2000 39). “Madness” is a loaded term, which we should always be careful to put into context and situate in relation to gender and race.

2.3.3 *Cognition and Selfhood*

Since ancient Greece, Snyder and Mitchell argue, “literary stories of mental discordance have provided the foundation for scientific explanations of cognitive deviance” (2000 39). It is through these stories that the norm defines itself and what it calls difference, and it is through narrative that medicine explains deviance. Works of fictions such as those under scrutiny in this chapter are part of the marginal corpus

of Indigenous women's writing, and therefore unlikely to become canonical and form the basis for future socio-cultural definitions of cognitive difference, yet we must acknowledge the role played by works that do become central to the general population's understanding of mental and intellectual disabilities, such as Barry Levinson's 1988 film *Rain Man* in relation to autism, for instance. If texts and movies about disability are used by the non-disabled community to try to "make sense" of certain impairments, we must not forget how those representations as well as the experience of impairment itself influence the way disabled individuals construct their own subjectivity. Snyder and Mitchell argue that "If the display of radical [...] cognitive deviance in narrative proves ultimately ambiguous to the values of our own disabilities movement, it nonetheless reveals that even the most 'derisive' portrait harbours within it an antithesis, its own disruptive potential" (2000 40). As with Indigenous writing, writing about disability does not need to present only positive images, but on the contrary can open discussion and foster debate.

We may wonder then how subjectivity and relationality are constructed in relation to cognitive difference. Charon notes that, for analytical philosophers, intersubjectivity is "the triangulation that occurs when two subjects simultaneously observe an object external to both," whereas for phenomenologists, it encompasses not only "the cognitive acts of perception and interpretation," but includes "the personal transformations incurred by virtue of human relation" (51). Human relation in the texts occurs between fictional characters, and exploring their relationship dynamics reveals as much about the writers themselves as it does about their community and the reader's own understanding of identity and intersubjectivity. Charon wonders about the paradox of looking for the author's self in fiction but examining the context in autobiography:

Where is the self recoverable – if, indeed, there is a recoverable self – in memory, in external reality, in others, in language? [...] What, finally, is the relation between writing of the self and being that self, that is to say, does the identity exist outside of its textual representation by the hand of that self? (70)

What if the self is neuroatypical and their psychic pathways differ from the norm? Intellectual disability is often held as an extreme case of difference in the

construction of selfhood, however this changes depending on whether it is framed as biological impairment or as social deviance. Hence Dan Goodley and Mark Rapley's desire to "*challenge* both the modernist construction of 'learning difficulties' as naturalized impairment, and also demonstrate that phenomena frequently understood as being an essential feature of 'intellectual disability' are better understood as *aspects of social interaction*" (127; original emphasis). Learning difficulties such as Sofie's in *Her Sister's Eye* do not foreclose her creating a singular identity and an idiosyncratic way of forming relationships, and indeed various social groups interpret Sophie's disability differently: Murilla and Archie offer her protection from harm while the white inhabitants of Mundra fear her as dangerous. Contrary to many narratives featuring intellectually disabled characters, Sofie's voice is heard as she narrates events that she alone knows, and about which we only have her version of the facts. This is in opposition with "the widespread and uncritical acceptance of the notion that people with 'intellectual disabilities' are, essentially, incapable of 'validly' reporting on their own subjectivity" and are therefore silenced (Goodley and Rapley 131). In the absence of contradicting narrative, Sofie is given the responsibility to produce meaning and selfhood unimpaired.

This is at odds with Joshua's constraints in *The People-Faces* and his struggles against a faceless psychiatric administration. His narration is minimal, indeed Petra Kupperts notes, "people with severe mental health problems are excluded from self-representation," and his condition means that he is overdetermined by what mental disability means in New Zealand society (124). One doctor even erases the specific individuality of his condition by approaching it as a hereditary trait: "there appears to be a predisposition for substance abuse in your family and a history of mental illness" (Cherrington 129). Young Nikki's response to the doctor's comment depersonalises Joshua further: "Who has a mental illness? It sounded like all those mad people in the movies, walking around in their zombie state, calling out crazy stuff" (Cherrington 129). Her remark highlights the effect of media representations on how the neurotypical population perceives cognitive deviance and expect it to be manifested. As an adult, Nikki still struggles with Joshua's difference: "I have no idea what he's talking about. I tell myself that this is just porangi talk. You'd think I'd be used to it by now, but it still makes my puku go

all funny” (Cherrington 229). The disturbing nature of Joshua’s auditory and visual sensations and beliefs separates him from Nikki, as does the fact that Nikki is free while Joshua is committed and drugged against his will. This is a common experience for many mentally disabled people that disrupts the formation of selfhood and the way the subject forms relationships with others: “[t]his lack of physical and mental privacy had undermined many people’s ability to be confident in their use of space” (Kuppers 125).⁴⁸

For Kumari Campbell, stereotypes are inseparable from selfhood because “[t]he process of identity formation cannot be separated from the person who is brought into being through those very subjectifying processes of ableism that view disability as inherently negative” (121). This is what Indigenous authors are fighting back against, especially Grace in her characterisation of Eben as a “perfect” child:

Although the boy was slow to walk, took four years before he was able to put food in his mouth without assistance, another year before he was fully toilet trained and never did learn to talk, he wasn’t much trouble. He never cried. He sat by himself for hours, ate when he was given food, went to bed when he was told and stayed asleep until woken next morning. (2006 44-5)

Despite social assumptions that intellectually disabled children are troublesome, cause more work for the parents, and are a burden on the family, Eben is a model of obedience and lives happily with Pani until her death. In the story, his difference is not qualified as either negative or positive by the narrator, Pani, or Eben himself; only the Christian home for unmarried mothers where the child is born, and the white community in Parutai where he grows up, express ableist judgement about him.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Sofie, whose learning difficulty is also constitutive of her identity but who is a more nuanced character. Murray notes that narratives by autistic authors often present their world as fragmented (2008 149). This forces us to examine Sofie’s narrative, written in a-grammatical and elliptical language and jumping between topics to reflect her idiosyncratic way of being as a condition of her ontological presence (Cleven 56-60). Her capacity for cunning is at

⁴⁸ See also “Chief” Bromden, the Native American narrator of Ken Kesey’s novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and his distrust of American mental health institutions leading him to stop taking his medication and break out of hospital (78).

odds with Eben's innocence, as Archie discovers when she abducts a little boy and he has to coax her into releasing the child: "[t]hat was the strong will and cunning of Sofie Dove" (Cleven 51). Caroline too is cunning and manipulative despite her mental disability, in Murilla's words: "*Snaky, bloody snaky at times. She's like that. One minute fine, next cunning and sneaky*" (Cleven 106; original emphasis). Both Sofie and Caroline are truly multidimensional characters: vulnerable due to their conditions, yet strong and capable to make decisions and get what they want.

Archie's amnesia complicates his construction of self because he does not remember who he is. When Caroline asks about his disfigurement, he answers that it was an accident but "[t]he truth was something he could not tell her because he didn't even know it himself. There was no memory to prompt why he came to be so scarred" (Cleven 15). This statement can be read as an allegory for Aboriginal people today, who are living with the consequences of genocide even if it is not in their immediate experiential memory. Archie's struggle is that of finding out who he is, yet at the same time he dreads to recall the horror of what he forgot:

At times, he feels that he's a no one. For days on end he'll keep the front door shut and sit inside the dark, cool house like a cockroach, too afraid to face the light. And all the time he'll rack his mind for anything that'll tell him who and what he *really* is. [Memory] refuses to tell him anything. But, eventually, he does learn something: he has no past. History is the backbone of all life, that much he knows, and if ya don't have history, ya don't have life. (Cleven 87; original emphasis)

The past eventually catches up with him, and the self of Raymond Gee overcomes the history-less Archie Corella as he reveals to Murilla who he actually is: "All this time walkin around this town n not knowin that I come full circle. Back to the place I were to start with" (Cleven 218). His return to Mundra was unwitting, possibly motivated by his subconscious. Archie's amnesia is inextricably linked with the loss of home and family, and Nana Vida discloses the truth of what happened to him:

When Edward Drysdale bashed the boy with the rifle, maybe he done some damage to his head. The scar on Raymond's face were caused by Drysdale. Raymond Gee didn't know who he really was! Somewhere along the line he must have put those bad memories away. When you're numb from pain and can't take it anymore, your mind tells ya many things. That poor, poor boy put it away so far that he lost himself, lost all

or part of his memory. A lotta people survive by forgetting the sorrow in their lives. (Cleven 224)

Her explanation for Archie's scars and amnesia, seizures and fainting fits, reflects Caroline's acquired cognitive disability at the hands of the Drysdale men, bringing closer the black man and the white woman, and opening the door for a possible alliance like that of Archie and Caroline.

The individual and collective histories of Mundra shape the ways in which the community and its members behave towards the past. When Doris asks Nana Vida about the past, the latter refuses to speak at first: "'Just be careful, Doris, you might find something you won't like.' 'Only interested in our history with this town is all.' [...] 'Doris, some things are better left where they are'" (Cleven 74). As we will see in Chapter 4 with Sally Morgan's *My Place*, the Aboriginal past is so traumatic that it still holds the power to hurt people in the present. Nana Vida finally agrees to speak to Doris when she acknowledges the younger woman's need, like Archie, to know the past in order to know who she is: "People need to know their history, otherwise there's this terrible feeling of being lost" (Cleven 140). For Doris, the experience of denial of a painful past is specific to the Aboriginal collective psyche: "It's like you feel bad about being black so you try to forget everything [...]. They say they can't remember. Like their minds were washed away" (Cleven 141). The Aboriginal people of Mundra are people without history not only because they have been deprived of it by colonisation, but also because their history is so traumatic that many had to forget it in order to be able to construct a productive self and identity, and to form relations within and outside their community.

As with Indigenous identity, disabled identity is constructed through relations with oneself and others, and like colour-blindness, "mindblindness [is] a 'trope of dehumanization'" that must be rejected (Savarese and Zunshine 24). Savarese and Zunshine advocate instead for "neurocosmopolitanism [as] the idea of a trans-neurocommunity, the feeling of being respectfully at home with all manner of neurologies" (20). Respecting cognitive difference in a neurocosmopolitan framework means allowing neuroatypical people to build identities and modes of intersubjectivity informed by their race, gender, and (dis)ability. Moreover, Goodley

and Rapley remind us of the importance of relations in this process: “the possibility of self-hood is reinterpreted in light of this *expanded identity* [...] a situated, enlarged subject – the subject as social movement – where *interdependence* is crucial to the formation of notions of autonomy” (138; original emphasis). The individual within the collective, the self-in-relation, is at the heart of the present reflection on Indigeneity and disability, and the desire to challenge normative social and medical expectations.

2.3.4 Relativising Normalcy

Concepts of normalcy and deviance are central to postcolonial disability analysis because of their ubiquity in both postcolonial and disability contexts, as well as their disruptive potential. Snyder and Mitchell note that “*disability is foundational to both cultural definition and to the literary narratives that challenge normalizing prescriptive ideals*” (2000 51; original emphasis). The role of disability literature is therefore to expose normalcy as a reductive myth and challenge its representational and cultural hegemony through the presence of multidimensional disabled characters. In *Her Sister's Eye*, when white woman Tamara says “[a]ll the Hughes had that in them. Madness,” she accuses Caroline’s parents of deviating from the racial norm and being allies to Aboriginal people (Cleven 184). Mental illness is the only explanation acceptable to Tamara for a white person defending a black person. Furthermore, Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare point out that “[t]he *individual and medical models of disability*, which perceive and classify disability in terms of a meta-narrative of deviance, lack and tragedy, [...] assume it to be logically separate from and inferior to ‘normalcy’” (2; original emphasis). In *The People-Faces*, inmates in Joshua’s psychiatric hospital are indeed told that they are inside to get better, assuming that there is something wrong with them and that they are not “normal” enough as they are (Cherrington 85).

In order to question the idea of normalcy, scholars must first distinguish between social and biological understandings of disability. Liz Crow writes that

“many people labelled ‘mentally ill’ [...] simply do not conform to contemporary social norms of behaviour” (70). There is a much contested and highly subjective boundary between the original/eccentric and the abnormal/pathological, as contradictory diagnoses and medical disputes show. The evolution of the way society treats people with disabilities over time “shows that disability can be thought of not so much as a ‘condition’ of individuals but as a creation of specific social and historical beliefs and contexts” (Ballard 15). Indeed, being “able” means to be able to behave in a certain coded way, while “disabled” means that one deviates from these social and cultural expectations to the point that other members of society are unsettled and uncomfortable with the behaviour. As Ballard remarks, mentioning the socio-political context of disability “is not intended to detract from the challenge that intellectual or other impairments may represent for individuals and those who care for them” (21). It does not silence the actual lived experience of disabled people and their carers, but on the contrary aims at finding new ways for society to support and include its disabled members on the latter’s own terms.

In traditional Indigenous contexts, disability is just one of many ways of being in the world and interacting with it. As a result, Barker remarks, in settler colonies “the hegemony of normalcy is intricately tied up with the process of settler indigenization, the system of normalization by which European settlers became the hegemonic inhabitants of the nation-space” (2011 39). Hence the crucial role of Indigenous disability literature in undermining this hegemony and offering alternative narratives of Indigenous ways of being with the land and each other. Indigenous norms regarding disability remain marginal, and in Aotearoa/ New Zealand for example families are faced with specific difficulties that arise from “the failure to acknowledge Māori ethnicity and culture in health, education and community services” (Timutimu-Thorpe 95). Despite cultural training programmes for health professionals in contact with Māori patients and family, the contact between the two groups is often deleterious and leads to substandard institutional care. On the other hand, Māori communities often have alternative ways of dealing with difference and caring for their disabled members, and their stories “reflect the supportive nature of Māori families made up of three generations. Māori families typically share child-rearing responsibilities” (Timutimu-Thorpe 113). Several

generations share caring roles but also provide a learning experience for all involved: the disabled individual, the main carer, the family, the community, and society at large. In Timutimu-Thorpe's article, she mentions that the families she interviewed "had a name for the selfless support that Māori people offer each other. They called it Māori Love and they regarded it highly. Māori have a tradition of offering this kind of support. We call it *aroha* [love]" (Timutimu-Thorpe 116). Collective caring is a cultural feature embedded in Māori society and language, even though it is not always valued by the wider society.

Faced with an institutional model and a community-based model opposed to one another, we must question and relativise normalcy. In *Enforcing Normalcy*, Lennard Davis argues that studying normalcy would expose disability as "not a discrete object but a set of social relations" (11). Since it is interpreted differently in various cultural contexts, deviance from the able norm is not an objective criteria but a socially constructed "thing." The relativising impetus derived from postcolonial disability narratives shows that, as in the case of Joshua who stands for a special bond between the living and the ancestors for his whānau but is diagnosed as mentally disabled by the Pākehā health system, "normalcy is culturally contingent rather than universal – what is considered to be a 'normal' or 'disabled' form of embodiment in one location does not necessarily hold true elsewhere" (Barker, 2011 4). This is all the more important when examining mental and intellectual disabilities, which are embodied differently from physical and motor disabilities. Indeed, "retardation and genius are not simply facts of nature or of medical opinion, but are culturally defined. Society uses the extremes, the nonaverages, to define what is to be called normal. Suspicion of the disabled and the superabled provides an opposing cohesion that unifies the majority as standard" (S. Fox 407). Any individual situated on the edges of the norm is taxed with deviance in order to reinforce the unity of the masses.⁴⁹ However, the general population can gain a sense of the normalcy of difference through regular contact with disabled people, as in "Eben" when the titular character starts busking on the streets; while some parents pull their children away, others "remembered their own days of staring, which after a

⁴⁹ See superhero comics such as *X-Men* and TV shows such as *Heroes*, where superabled people are persecuted by "normal" humans.

while can make anything normal. Eben was just Eben” (Grace, 2006 57). Fascination and repulsion cede their place to habit and acceptance of difference.

One step further, actively challenging normalcy can operate within the narratives themselves. Corker and Shakespeare for instance mention the potential of postmodernism to challenge modernism and bring to the fore its concern with “*how we build inclusive societies* and with *the social role of knowledge* in this process” (3; original emphasis). This is a central issue in postcolonial disability literature, where the need for such progressive reforms is presupposed. They also assert that one of the main themes of postmodernism is “the decentring of the subject and the social world, often through an emphasis on language, discourse and culture” (Corker and Shakespeare 3). As I argue in Chapter 3, this is a self-defeating project, for the subject and society are both constructed in language and in turn (re)construct it. On the contrary, Indigenous texts re-place the subject and the community at the centre in a dialogical situation where one is not subjected to the other. In *The People-Faces*, there are dissenting voices on mental disability within the medical establishment, such as nurse Waimarie who asks “[w]hen the hell do we stop to think that maybe it’s us who need to do some changing?” (Cherrington 284). She questions a system that fails to accommodate difference and thereby shows that medical institutions could not exist without disability, and are thus contingent on perpetuating their functions of diagnosis and care by enforcing the interdependent normalcy/deviance binary. This intrinsic relationship is examined by Corker and Shakespeare in the light of Derrida’s theory of “*différance*,” a coinage on the words difference and deferral, so a “Derridean perspective on disability would argue that though they are antagonistic, ‘*normativism*’ needs ‘*disability*’ for its own definition: a person without an impairment can define him/herself as ‘*normal*’ only in opposition to that which s/he is not – a person with an impairment” (7). A normative, or “*able*,” identity is constructed through exclusion, which must be countered with a more ethical response to difference.

Another way to designate people with and without cognitive difference is to talk about neuroatypical and neurotypical people as I have done in this chapter. Challenging the normative view of the psyche and of cognition in general “involves a

reconfiguration of what we might think of as a ‘working’ spectrum of humanity” (Murray, 2008 xvi). This new spectrum must include race, gender, and culture in order to offer a more complete and inclusive model. Yet we remain quite far from reaching this ideal, and mentally disabled people’s medical records are still “deemed indubitable evidence of our transgression from the ‘psychonorm’” (Wilson and Beresford 149). Anne Wilson (pseudonym) and Peter Beresford’s article in particular is an indictment of the UK mental health system and its failure to take into account disabled people’s experiences. They advocate for the need to acknowledge:

the complexities of the interaction between public and professional perceptions of ‘mental illness’ and ‘the mentally ill’; academic theories about the aetiology of ‘mental illness’ (including biogenetic explanations); the role of the pharmaceutical companies; the iatrogenic effects (physical and psychological) of ‘psychiatric treatment’ and *our* understandings of our original madness and distress. (Wilson and Beresford 150; original emphasis)

Their criticism of the medical distinction between madness and distress, or “psychoses” and “neuroses,” is based on the argument that such a binary suggests that “those who are diagnosed ‘neurotic’ are perhaps *less Other* than people diagnosed as ‘psychotic’” (Wilson and Beresford 154; my emphasis). This hierarchy between the sufferers of neurosis such as depression on the one hand, and psychosis such as schizophrenia on the other, divides the disabled community on society’s terms and forms an obstacle to the challenge to normalcy.

If scholars are not careful, however, even the empowering project of disability studies can result in establishing new norms and a new conformist mould, hence Barker’s desire to challenge disability studies on what she terms “the universality of the social model and the damaging nature of metaphorical representation” (2011 194). This is accompanied with the rejection of postmodernism by most disability scholars, for whom the word “has become a dumping ground for anything and everything that appears to challenge the orthodoxy for neo-Marxism, historical materialism and the social model” (Corker and Shakespeare 13). Disability studies could learn from postcolonial studies and its on-going questioning and openness to alternative models of identity-formation (Sherry 18). This would require the radical acceptance of difference and the refusal to stigmatise deviance, like

Archie in *Her Sister's Eye* who intuitively accepts Sofie as she is: “[t]hat’s her, seeing things the way other people don’t,” neither wrong nor in need of a cure, just different (Cleven 162).

2.4 Conclusion: Non-Normative Narrative Identity

In this chapter we have seen how disability studies can help shed light on the construction of non-normative identities in Indigenous discourse. Theories such as Snyder and Mitchell’s narrative prosthesis and ablenationalism find echoes in Indigenous critiques of settler colonial institutions and reveal links between the disciplines. Moreover, disability can be seen as the “last frontier” in western fiction, for “like race, disability represents a powerful, yet culturally un-interrogated conflict within the national psyche. It is the site where the conflictual nature of our beliefs about ‘viable lives’ gets acted out” (Snyder and Mitchell 2000, 178). The de-individualisation of disability in favour of contextual issues parallels the analysis of structural racism as opposed to individual prejudice. Indeed, Philip Ferguson remarks, “[d]isability is not a fact or entity whose nature is waiting to be discovered. Disability is rather an experience waiting to be described or, more precisely, a social construction of multiple experiences waiting to be recognised” (296). As a social construction, it affects and is affected by relationships between disabled and non-disabled individuals, in particular carers.

Like the narratives examined by Barker in *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability*, the primary texts under study in this chapter “collectively promote an alternative politics of care” predicated on Indigenous knowledges and ways of being (2011 189). One such example is the culture-based form of healing that Nikki offers Joshua in *The People-Faces* when she gives him food for their journey: “Cooked food. It gets rid of the tapu. Brings balance. That’s what our Maori teacher at school used to say” (Cherrington 134). Joshua’s rejection of Nikki’s food shows his alienation from Māori ways in spite of his connection to culture. Via whakapapa, or genealogy, Joshua and Nikki take on the roles held in the previous generations by

their grandparents Zac and Maka, respectively “*the best carver and the best storyteller of all Te Kohinga*” (Cherrington 200; original emphasis). As guardians of material and spiritual culture, they pass on their responsibilities to Joshua and Nikki through intergenerational relationality.

Even in the case of intellectual disability, arguably more objectively definable and quantifiable than mental disability, we need to pay attention to the historical discourses that produce knowledge, for “learning-difficulty-as-impairment must be understood relationally, historically, practically and critically” (Goodley and Rapley 135). In addition, Ballard argues that “intellectual disability is revealed as a complex issue involving impairment, attitudes, values, economics, minority status, politics, ideologies, empowerment, disempowerment, and historical, cultural and social circumstances” (298). These remarks go in the same direction as the recommendations for researchers drafted by Tihi and Gerson in the Māori context: “[c]ultural safety means the right to have your culture validated, cultural practices, beliefs, values and priorities respected, adhered to and taken into account when decisions are made. Cultural safety is based on attitude change” (140). Since most care workers for Māori disabled people are tauiwi, the latter need to learn to be “culturally safe in their attitudes and practices,” that is to take into account and respect Indigenous specificity (Tihi and Gerson 140).

Although Aboriginal and Māori cultures, ethnicities, and histories are very different, the common experience of colonisation, the on-going subjection to settler institutions in the age of globalisation, and the transnational links between both communities justify transcultural studies such as this one. In Australia, bonds between distinct Aboriginal nations have developed since the early colonial era, although “the concept of pan-Aboriginality is quite foreign to traditional (pre-contact) Aboriginal consciousness. It is only in juxtaposition with a foreign presence that an Aboriginal otherness becomes meaningful” (Ariss 136). Invasion has created the need for race consciousness and unity to be constructed and reflected in Indigenous literature. Robert Ariss explains that “[t]he base of [Aboriginal writers]’ approach is personal experience, the particularistic, articulated through its identification with a community, often genealogical, which is localised but

suggestive of a broader social context. This could be characterised as a pan-Aboriginality” (134). Pan-Aboriginality is a solidarity identity inclusive of all nations, even of those whose connection to their Indigenous origins has been severed, for example as part of the Stolen Generations, and that opposes colonial restrictions on Indigeneity and the demand for authenticity.⁵⁰

The binaries explored in this chapter have provided useful prompts for enquiry but are eventually meaningless in the face of textual and cultural evidence. Like Garland Thomson’s New Historicist approach to disability in the works of African American women writers, I argue that mental and intellectual disability in Indigenous women’s writing mostly “serves to destabilize the dominant binary codes of abnormal/normal, male/female, desired/undesired, by openly exploring marginal identities in political, rather than stigmatizing, terms” (quoted in Snyder and Mitchell, 2000 28). It is imperative to rewrite one’s identity when it has been overwritten by over two centuries of colonisation, and to tear down imposed binaries through nuanced characterisation. Disabled Indigenous people carry a double imprint of difference: that of disability and that of Indigeneity. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler asserts that “what can be seen, what qualifies as a visible marking, is a matter of being able to read a marked body in relation to unmarked bodies, where unmarked bodies represent the currency of normative whiteness” (170-1). In the case of intellectual and mental disability, it is non-normative behaviour that is read by able people against their own perceived neurological normalcy.

Social policing is shaped by and reshapes literary representation, which in turn “bears on the production and realization of disabled subjectivities” (Snyder and Mitchell 2000, 9). In their narratives, Grace, Cherrington, and Cleven join a global artistic and cultural discussion about the representation of disability, while simultaneously anchoring their stories and their characters in the Indigenous world. For Frank, narrative identity is the construction of the self rather than a display of ego, and this is also the distinction I make here (62). In specific contexts such as Māori culture, a narrative disabled Indigenous identity is constructed through

⁵⁰ Pan-Africanism is another example of an inclusive identity available to Black people all over the world who can trace ancestors back to the African continent.

relationships with living and dead relatives in the locus of the marae. Thus in *The People-Faces* Maka explains that “the wharenuī is warmed only by the people. It is the people that nourish the mauri [spirit]” and highlights the central role of the whānau (Cherrington 30). This echoes the words of one of Tihi and Gerson’s participants who points out that “[t]he land is important too, but it’s the human factor, whānaungatanga, the people coming back together” that form the backbone of Māori culture (Tihi and Gerson 138).

The scope of this chapter on intersubjective Indigenous selves in relationships of care could be widened to include testimonies by the native peoples of other settler countries such as Canada and the USA. Indeed, J. Weaver states the following:

Indigenous societies are *synecdochic* (part-to-whole) rather than the more Western conception that is *metonymic* (part-to-part). As Native American historian Donald Fixico notes, Natives tend to see themselves in terms of “self in society” rather than “self and society.” It is an “enlarged sense of self.” It is, in a profound sense, a mentality that declares, “I am We.” (1997, 39; 2005, 227; original emphasis)

The next chapter examines the interplay between self, close relations, and community in Indigenous women’s writing through the analysis of the role of language in the formation of intersubjectivity; before turning to the place of collective memory and we-dentity in Chapter 4 as products of relationality.

Chapter 3.

Voice, Body, Country: Language and Subjectivity

*“And let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English
for we intend to do unheard of things with it” (Achebe 50)*

The politics of language is all the more central to Indigenous studies since one in four of the world's extant languages are now under threat of extinction (Vidal, n. p.). Most languages at risk originate in areas of contact where several language groups share a relatively small geographical space and are threatened by the dominant language of the region, from Papua New Guinea to the Amazon forest in South America. In settler countries such as Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, the colonisation of Indigenous land has been accompanied by the colonisation of Indigenous bodies and languages. The relationship between language, body, and land in Keri Hulme's *the bone people* (1985) and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006) is therefore analysed in relation to orality, gesture, and mapping in order to bring to light the role of language in the formation of intersubjectivity and relationality. I argue that the use of language in Aboriginal and Māori women's writing is anchored in the racialised, sexualised body of Indigenous women, as well as the locale of their ancestral land. Language in Indigenous women's writing thus participates in determining how the self relates to herself, her close relations, and the wider community.

Any analysis of the place of language in Indigenous writing must start with a reminder of the role of colonisation in bringing about the ideological hegemony of English and of “[t]he crucial function of language as a medium of power” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 37). White-controlled education systems and official policies of assimilation have often been geared toward the annihilation of Indigenous cultures, languages, and epistemologies. Thus, while pre-contact Australia featured about half a million Indigenous people, 500 clan groups, 250 languages, and several distinct cultures, only 90 languages are still spoken today (Schaffer and Smith 98). As mentioned earlier in the introduction, Anita Heiss and Peter Minter remark in the preface to their *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature* that “just as the Crown's acquisition of 1770 had made sovereign Aboriginal land *terra nullius*, it also made Aboriginal people *vox nullius*. It took only a few generations for almost

two-thirds of the pre-contact Aboriginal languages to be made extinct” (2). One of the aims of contemporary Aboriginal writing is to reclaim this voice through the remaking of English to serve an Aboriginal consciousness in the creation of a *vox viva*, or living voice.

Despite attempts at linguistic revival across Australia, Aboriginal literature today is mostly written in English (Huggan, 2007 7). Consequently, the term “Aboriginal writing” is used here to refer to writing by self-identified Indigenous Australians, thereby defining artistic production by the self-defined ethnic and cultural affiliation of the author. The tension derived from writing Aboriginal literature in English is one that all colonised peoples have to contend with, hence Scottish novelist and controversial Booker Prize winner James Kelman’s remark about his decision to write in Scots: “I didn’t want to work within someone else’s value system that inferiorised my people – which is what English literature is” (quoted in Talib 132).⁵¹ English language and literature have a history of marginalising non-native speaking, non-white people and from the early days of colonisation were used as weapons of imperialism to replace Indigenous languages and literatures (Talib 9-10; Ashcroft 67). The subversive power of Indigenous languages and non-standard englishes rests with their political potential as repositories of cultural knowledge and meaning-making practices.

the bone people tells the story of three relational selves who meet, separate, and reunite. Kerewin, a pale-skinned Māori woman, finds mute Pākehā child Simon inside her house and starts a friendship with his Māori foster father Joe, which is complicated when she finds out that Joe physically mistreats Simon. This labyrinthine tome written in a highly idiosyncratic style by a mixed-race woman and presenting some horrific scenes of violence against a child has elicited strong reactions from critics, especially after it was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 1985.⁵² The realms of language and violence are of particular interest since the three protagonists’ modes of expression drive the narration. It is my contention that the inadequacy of language and the failure of communication enable the perpetuation of

⁵¹ See also Ngugi Wa Thiong’o in a later section of this chapter.

⁵² For more on *the bone people* controversy see Fee 26; Shieff 144; Williams 89; and Stead 341.

violence in the novel, which in turn can only be stopped by re-establishing a sense of community where language flows freely. On the other hand, *Carpentaria* is Wright's second novel and her most famous to date as the 2007 recipient of the Miles Franklin award, the most prestigious literary prize in Australia. The story of the Aboriginal Pricklebush people and their relationship with Uptown, the white zone of the fictional town of Desperance, and the Gurfurrit mine, *Carpentaria* is an epic novel that crosses the boundaries of literary genres.⁵³ Its main Aboriginal characters, the members of the Phantom family, all have a distinctly personal relationship with language, and the land, more accurately designated as "country" in Aboriginal English, is treated as a subject in its own right, with a voice and a body of its own.

The nature of language as a system is a source of debate among scholars. For the linguist Emile Benveniste, language cannot be described as an instrument because "[t]o speak of an instrument is to put man and nature in opposition," as a tool is a fabrication rather than an innate function of the human mind and body; whereas for literary scholar Bill Ashcroft "language is a tool which has meaning according to the way in which it is used" (223; 2001 57). Their words conjure up rather interesting metaphors: an instrument can be used to make music, or as a proxy for the hand to achieve a task, while a tool is a mechanical device often used to fix what is broken. Language cannot be said to fit either the role of an instrument or a tool, since neither affects its user the way language affects its speaker or writer. However, it has been argued that "a post-colonial approach to linguistics [...] reaffirms the notion of language as a practice and reintroduces the 'marginal' complexities of speakers' practice as the subject of linguistics" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 44). Those marginal linguistic events set individuals speakers apart from Standard English (SE) and Received Pronunciation (RP), and separate speakers from each other.

Older generations of colonised people have often suffered from what might be called the Caliban complex in reference to the character in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. For instance, Native Canadian author Lee Maracle recalls her grandmother's advice: "[m]aster their language, daughter; hidden within it is the way

⁵³ It is unclear what natural resource is mined by Gurfurrit.

we are to live among them” (65-6). This reveals a belief put forward by the colonial administration during periods of assimilation that learning to speak and write English as well as white people would automatically bring better living standards, educational opportunities, and chances of survival. Time and again institutional racism has made sure that this would not be the case and that Indigenous people in settler countries would be confined largely to a menial workforce supplying cheap labour, regardless of their linguistic proficiency in English (Fesl 126; Ashcroft, 2009 2).

Beside, the question of language and cultural survival or revival is fraught with material difficulties caused by the often irrevocable loss of Indigenous languages. Although Julian Kunnie and Nomalungelo Goduka assert that “English is inadequate to capture the essence of the spiritually centered wisdoms of [...] Indigenous people,” for authors who only have fluency in English, it is still possible to transform it to suit their needs (x). As a protean semiotic system, language can be remade by writers to accommodate not only their individual needs but also the needs of their community: it is “the foundation upon which cultural revival can be built, not just something that describes or gives information” (Onus 94; Tusitala Marsh, 2010 214). Although cultural revival is often accompanied by linguistic revival, English as an adaptable medium also plays a part in the process, and the tension inherent in the use of the coloniser’s language by the colonised people can be a fruitful one since to approach English as a site of conflict between settler and Indigenous discourses allows the writers to creatively seek new ways of making and communicating meaning (Dever 23). Maryanne Dever adds that “language emerges as a form of interface between a difficult past and a problematic present,” with the writers inscribing themselves in this continuity to influence the future (23). Indigenous authors such as Hulme and Wright may write in English, but as is the case in the Chinua Achebe quotation opening this chapter, it is an English that they reappropriate creatively.

Lack of proficiency in Indigenous languages is one of the main difficulties faced by researchers in the field of Indigenous literary studies. In the context of Oceania, the relative ease of translating Māori words and phrases thanks to online as

well as printed resources is contrasted with the frustrating lack of Aboriginal dictionaries, since there are many different languages and language families autochthonous to the continent. Multi-linguistic competency is often necessary to study the language politics of primary texts in this corpus, even if it is to be developed during the research process through learning vocabulary and grammatical forms from the texts themselves. The difficulty faced by non-Indigenous researchers is also a reminder of the necessity of humility when producing academic readings of Indigenous texts. As Hulme reminds us when talking to Antonella Sarti about scholarly analyses of her work: “I suspect that if you make the net wide enough it will catch all sorts of things; but that’s not necessarily why the net was woven” (61).

Published texts are meant to be shared with a readership and therefore establish intersubjectivity on several levels by connecting the author and the reader, but also the characters within and among themselves, and with personified elements of the landscape and spirituality. Indeed, voice is never disembodied in the novels, even when the voice and the body are that of the land itself or someone’s voice is heard through someone else’s body. Spoken language can be said to be the primary means of interpersonal communication, since it is direct, synchronous, and in its purest form unmediated by technology. Accordingly, I start by examining the nature and function of speech in the novels. As Ismail Talib asserts, “[t]he more visible the language is in a work of literature, or the more linguistically experimental it is, the more the focus is on language itself” (130). In her own preface to *the bone people*, Hulme foregrounds her “experiments and eccentricities” with language, and justifies her radical refusal of editorial alterations, while reviewers of *Carpentaria* comment on its linguistic complexity (1986a vii; Shoemaker 55).

If “[l]anguage is so organized that it permits each speaker to *appropriate to himself* an entire language by designating himself as I,” we must bear in mind that, by the time the speaker says “I,” the language has already appropriated them (Benveniste 226; original emphasis).⁵⁴ Since “‘I’ posits the existence and presence of

⁵⁴ Benveniste notes that “[i]t is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*, because language alone establishes the concept of ‘ego’ in reality, in *its* reality which is that of being” (224; original emphasis). Different languages establish different conceptions of the subject, so replacing a people’s language with English means replacing their way of thinking (Yunupingu 222).

‘you’,” then language loss impacts the way individuals relate to each other and their community, which is intersubjectivity itself (Benveniste 225). The links between language and intersubjectivity have been explored by scholars such as ethnolinguist Philip Riley, who notes:

[t]he primary mechanism of the social knowledge system and, therefore, of the social learning process is *language*. The distribution and acquisition of knowledge takes place during dyadic or group interactions in which participants establish *intersubjectivity*, a state of shared meaning. The ability to establish intersubjectivity, to enter into social and meaningful contact with another, is a necessary condition for the formation of identity. (33; original emphasis)

Language is the medium of the formation of both identity and relationality. This begs the question of how to negotiate the fact that one’s subjectivity and the way one cognitively constructs relationships with others is determined in a language imposed by those who successfully sought to exterminate the language of one’s ancestors. For Indigenous women, potentially doubly marginalised because of their race and gender, the need to create a new language in order to negotiate the desire for self-definition is most urgent. As Francoise Lionnet puts it, postcolonial women writers “are searching for new cultural forms and hybrid languages that better represent the particularisms of the communities about which they write” (1995 19). Dissatisfied with the English they have been socialised into by colonial institutions, Indigenous women writers struggle to reclaim their voice, take back control over representation, and establish relationality on their own terms.

Powhiri Rika-Heke identifies a fourfold aim in Indigenous writing from a Māori perspective: 1) to alert to the danger of loss and to foster pride in the culture; 2) to show and respect the Māori way of life; 3) to educate non-Indigenous readers; and 4) to share the impossibility of fully communicating the Māori experience (1996 150). The role of language to signal the impossibility for a non-Indigenous reader to fully understand the Indigenous experience is itself a form of communication, and similarly expressing difference is an intersubjectivity act, albeit one that establishes a relationship of distance. This distance is present on a linguistic level through the use of idioms specific to regional ethnic englishes such as Aboriginal English (AE) and

Māori English (ME), words in Indigenous languages, and grammatical interference.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is my contention that the study of Aboriginal and Māori texts by western scholars belongs to the discipline of exoliterature, a term constructed on the model of exolinguistics, which means that there is “an asymmetry in the levels of communicative competence of speaker and hearer” (Riley 221). Acknowledging and accepting this asymmetry in terms of cultural competence is of paramount importance to responsible research.

3.1 Voice

3.1.1 English

All the texts examined in this thesis use English as the main medium of expression, with some regional variants and a few words or sentences in Indigenous languages. The tension inherent in this situation is exemplified by the famous disagreement between Achebe and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o on whether English is an African language, and thus on its validity as a medium for African literature (Ashcroft, 2001 56). In settler colonial countries such as Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is no doubt that English has become an Oceanic language and that, despite language revitalisation and some examples of writers publishing in Indigenous languages, most if not all contemporary Māori and Aboriginal authors write in English, either because it is their first language, the language they have most proficiency in, or in order to reach a wider readership (Walder 52). As the dominant language of Oceania and the native tongue of most contemporary Māori and Aboriginal people, English is not a choice so much as a necessity for Indigenous writers. The paradox derived from this inversion of the nature/nurture binary lies at the heart of literature: the author is a native English speaker who learns an

⁵⁵ Although I use the initials ME to refer to Maori English in this chapter, I am aware that it usually means Middle English.

Indigenous language (and its customs) consciously, by choice, but also part of a people and a culture who learnt English and its customs consciously, under duress.⁵⁶

Although native speakers of English, Hulme and Wright often use Indigenous words in their writing. As Margery Fee remarks, “[e]ven writers like Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace, whose ‘Maoriness’ does not seem to be in question, speak English as their mother tongue, and have had to write their way back into their Maori language and culture” (11). Writing one’s way back into a language and a culture seems difficult enough, but how does one negotiate multiple “writing-backs” when one has been adopted into the dominant society and discultured of one’s Indigenous identity? How about when authors openly celebrate their mixed heritage? Hulme self-identifies as a hybrid individual of Orkney, Lancashire, and Ngai Tahu descent; and Wright has Irish, Chinese, and Waanyi ancestry (Hulme, 1981 294; K. O’Brien 215).⁵⁷ Both women put their Indigenous identity first in their writing, and their use of language reflects this choice.

In the complex settler/invasion context, asserting one’s Indigenous identity is an on-going challenge where “the general idea of the interdependence of language and identity – you are the way you speak” is widely exploited (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 53). The use of non-standard forms creates a de-familiarising effect, as does “the turning of Maori epithets to a modern situation [for] the development of a unique variant in English” for example (Simms 228). In *the bone people*, Hulme creates new compound words for colours that do not have a name in English, she argues, like “seabluegreen” or “stonegreyblue” (1986a 54). As with most regional variants, there is no single variety of ME, for it is a form of English generally

⁵⁶ Debate on the use of English in anti-colonial literature is ongoing, with authors and scholars taking various positions on this issue. At one end is Jean-Paul Sartre’s assertion that “since the oppressor is present even in the language they speak, they will speak this language to destroy it” (26). At the other end of the spectrum are those who subscribe to Audre Lorde’s essay titled “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” as a critique of the use of the English language in a postcolonial context. However, when she writes that the master’s tools “may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change,” she is actually talking about women trying to climb patriarchal structures rather than taking them down (1984 112). Sartre’s emphasis on the ability of writers to reclaim a language and destroy it is contrasted with those who cite Lorde to express mistrust in the dominant language’s ability to be subverted.

⁵⁷ Hulme’s Māori iwi, or tribe, is from the South Island; Wright’s Aboriginal mob from North Queensland.

constructed in opposition to the dominant discourse. The intentional use of non-standard terms is also part of a movement to assert difference from within, since “education, class status, and an ability to speak ‘standard English’ will usually be synonymous” and non-standard dialect is therefore used to signify an awareness of the politics of SE (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 76).

The problematics of denouncing colonisation and doing so in the colonising language allows Indigenous writers to play with languages in ways impossible in monoglossic nations. One can identify four linguistic registers in *the bone people* and *Carpentaria*: SE for the narration, non-standard New Zealand English (NZE) and Australian English (AuE) as well as ME and AE spoken by the characters, and Indigenous languages. If “the syncretic and hybridised nature of post-colonial experience refutes the privileged position of a standard code in the language,” then these four registers are just as valid in the national context (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin: 40). In *the bone people*, Hulme displays knowledge of literary Scots and archaic English as well as SE, NZE, ME, and te reo, thus giving legitimacy to ME by putting long-recognised dialects on an equal footing with Indigenous-inflected English (1986a 35, 276). Kerewin also suggests that languages are conventions that refer to things, and that these things are real, no matter what they are called, through the example of the “co-eye English pronunciation, kor-fie Maori pronunciation, alla same tree,” making a point about the permanence of objects such as trees despite the mutability of names (1986a 125-6).

If the language of writing and publication of *the bone people* is English, it is an English that is infused with Indigenous words as well as elements of Māori syntax and grammar, and consistently trying to evade the constraints of SE.⁵⁸ Despite Hulme’s preoccupation with language, she also offers alternatives to spoken or

⁵⁸ Mark Williams has attacked the novel in terms of linguistic subservience to Hulme’s putative ethical agenda. He asserts that the novel “is a very traditional novel in terms of the understanding of language, representation, and character on which it rests [...]. The language of the novel, for all its word-spinning tendencies, serves ultimately to require us to make moral discriminations about the actions and intentions of the characters as though they were actual humans, not fictional constructs” (Williams 90). This is blatantly overlooking Hulme’s forays into interstitial and liminal spaces, evoking the instability of meaning and the potential of language for betrayal. Insistence on the written word as shifting, unreliable and yearning to escape meaning is evident in Hulme’s writing, including her short fiction (2004).

written words for her characters to connect with fellow humans and the natural world when verbal communication is seen as failing. Indeed, if we accept Tzvetan Todorov's assertion that "literature is itself paradoxical, constituted of words but signifying more than words, at once verbal and transverbal," the analysis of Hulme's language reveals the transverbal aspects of literature through her engagement with alternative forms of communication based on touch, breath, and music engaging all of the senses (156). For Hulme herself communication with the reader is a focal point of her writing: "in all kinds of ways, from me trapping your mind, eyes, and inner ear, as it were" (Sarti 59). Linguists identify three salient features of ME: "first, a distinctive prosodic pattern typically labelled 'syllable-timed' English, secondly the use of the pragmatic particle *eh*, and thirdly, the incorporation of Maori vocabulary into predominantly English conversational discourse" (Holmes, Stubbe and Marra 434-5). Although it is impossible to conclusively establish the prosody of a written text, both Kerewin and Joe use the particle "*eh*" abundantly, as well as *ne*, the Māori semantic unit thought to be the origin of *eh*, and incorporate Māori vocabulary and sentences in both speech and internal narration (Hulme, 1986a 6, 231).

The literary form of the novel is not a traditional feature of precolonial Indigenous cultural and artistic production, yet it seems to be favoured by a majority of Māori writers along with the short story. Ihimaera remarks on the link between language and form that "[w]hen you write in English, because there are narrative forms to consider, you tend then to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. But in Maori, most of our work has to do with different literary forms, with genealogy" (1991 230). In Māori fashion, Hulme places the telling of myth and actual events on an equal footing by "fusing the Maori sense of time and place and the communal sense of identity which the Maori feels with European techniques of narrative presentation, such as flashback and overlap" (Simms 226). In Aboriginal cultures too, custodians responsible for curating the stories they carried, rather than authors creating them, traditionally performed art. In *Carpentaria*, for example, Old Joseph Midnight singing a map of the Dreaming to Will Phantom testifies to this, as the older man shares with the younger knowledge he possesses as custodian of his culture (Wright 372).

As a European, and therefore elite, language, English across most of Oceania is firmly established as the medium of education, administration, and government.⁵⁹ Katherine Russo explains that “[t]he discursive representation of English as a colonial and settler property has determined the asymmetrical access to the social space engendered by its possession” (4). Language is yet another barrier standing between Indigenous people and the power of self-determination, and access to language has been closely monitored since the early days of colonisation, as was access to education. Russo adds that a certain kind of English was fulfilling this discriminatory role, although less “pure” forms were already emerging shortly after first contact:

[t]he establishment of the “monologism” of “standard” English, grounded in the colonial claim of possessing the “correct” meaning and syntax to which everybody must abide in order to communicate, is questioned by Indigenous appropriations of English. Language appropriation is determined by a relational, participatory understanding of meaning that calls attention to the speaker’s position towards others. (40)

This relational and participatory aspect of language is central in Indigenous writing, whether it is addressing the writing self, their community, or a non-Indigenous readership.

In *Carpentaria*, English proficiency as a marker of class has been internalised by the Aboriginal characters who use it to denigrate each other. Cilla Mooch, an Aboriginal man and the “token Black” of Uptown, is sent by the Council of Desperance to ask Norm to destroy the house his wife Angel Day built out of rubbish and scrap, arguing that it is encouraging other fringe-dwellers to build their own shanty huts. Mooch approaches Norm in “broken English”:

⁵⁹ If continuing linguistic colonisation is undisputed in settler countries, it can be argued that English has been adopted successfully as a neutral language in multilingual societies, particularly in tribal regions of Africa where distinct language groups occupy the same territory, for example in sub-Saharan Africa where borders have been designed by western colonisers (Talib 104, 107). This linguistic hegemony may also have something to do with the particularity of English as a protean language open to being moulded and remoulded at will by each speaker. As T.J. Cribb puts it, “[i]t belongs to everybody who can gain access and is owned by no one” (119). This potential stands in stark contrast to the other great language of African colonisation, French, whose evolution is jealously guarded by the members of the Academie Francaise, thus foreclosing any possibility for recognised regional variants to emerge, and confining non-standard forms to the status of grammatical mistakes.

“You know?! That what’s they is saying about you and all. Saying you started all of this camp stuff springing up here and there for we mob. Saying they got to stop it. Show a bit of respect for the place. Place belonga Desperance Shire Council. Stop the place looking like an infection of black heads and what have you.” [Norm:] “You sound like a fuzzy wuzzy, Mooch. Aren’t got anything to do with me and talk English.” (Wright 37).

Although Norm’s own English is non-Standard (AE form “Aren’t got”), Mooch is less competent in the language than Norm, giving him grounds to dismiss him on this basis. Yet exceptional proficiency is also suspect in this context, and conversely Angel’s speech puzzles Norm: “Where did she get it from? he wondered. Itinerants was not the language of the Pricklebush” (Wright 29). Broken English and multisyllabic English are both declared unusual in a society that polices the language spoken by Aboriginal people, with men like Norm internalising this policing and imposing it on others.

English variants in settler colonies integrate non-grammatical forms as local speakers modify the language to suit their needs. This leads to several linguistic processes, including relexification, deterritorialisation, code-switching, and undermining language to question its very meaning-making ability. Because of the limited space in this thesis, the first two processes will be outlined briefly before turning to the manifestations of the last two in the primary texts. Firstly, relexification describes the way a non-European language is being simulated in a Europhone text (Zabus 315).⁶⁰ Indigenous-authored texts tend not to uncritically accept the referentiality of language, and ensure that the reader experiences a similar form of estrangement. Next, the deterritorialisation of language attracts attention to the weakening link between language, culture, and place, and is therefore particularly salient in settler nations. It is also a feature of minor literature, defined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as “not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language” (16). Indigenous people may constitute a numerical minority, but the term “minor,” with its connotation of lesser importance and youth, is unsatisfactory to say the least, and reminiscent of colonial

⁶⁰ The indigenisation of English in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is apparent beyond the literary realm with the proliferation of scholarly publications on AE and ME (Arthur 1; Holmes, Stubbe and Marra 438).

rhetoric. Yet Deleuze and Guattari raise salient points about the elements they identify with “minor” literatures, which they explain in comparing a range of elements identified by Haim Vidal Sephiha (“terms which connote suffering”) and Klaus Wagenbach (“the use of words which connote sorrow”) (Deleuze and Guattari 23). We can easily guess why suffering and sorrow would be major themes in literatures that use associated terms profusely, but we should not lose sight of the fact that pride in resilience and affirmations of survival are also central to those literatures and must be included in a revised definition of minor literature.

Another way of putting English and Indigenous languages in a situation of dialogue is through the linguistic technique known as code-switching and that “constitutes a literary strategy which expresses cultural conflict through linguistic tensions” (Rika-Heke, 1996 155). Hulme makes extensive use of dialogue in *te reo* between the protagonists while writing the majority of the narration in *SE*, as in the following example of code-switching: “‘E ka pai, ka pai,’ his delight makes his voice rise” (1986a 282). Code-switching is commonly accepted as “the most common method of inscribing alterity by the process of appropriation,” although for Bill Ashcroft it tends to be consciously used by writers to make a politico-linguistic point:

words become synecdochic of the writer’s culture – the part that stands for the whole – rather than representations of the world, as the colonial language might. Thus the inserted [Indigenous] language “stands for” the colonized culture in a metonymic way, and its very resistance to interpretation constructs a “gap” between the writer’s culture and the colonial culture. (2001 75)

This is disregarding a well-known fact for bilingual individuals: that translations can never be exact, and that some words just do not exist in some languages because the reality they express does not exist in all cultures. As Scottish-Aboriginal artist Lin Onus points out, “[l]anguage encodes meanings and perceptions of the universe; bi- and multi-lingual readers [...] will know that each language brings with it a unique set of perceptions and understandings of the individual’s relationship within the greater society” (94). Code-switching is therefore also a strategy to achieve multiple goals, including “compensating for a lack of lexical or syntactic resources, topicalization, affirming personal identity, including or excluding the interlocutor

from a social group, humour, and so on” (Riley 63). Riley’s study, however wide-ranging, does not take into account the political position of the language or whether it is dominant or repressed among its speakers.

In settler countries, the absence of English equivalent for every Indigenous word further shows the inability of the colonising language to represent the local culture accurately. If, as Jean-Paul Sartre writes, the “specific traits of a society correspond exactly to the untranslatable locutions of its language,” the use of Māori and Aboriginal languages stems from a pragmatic need to represent reality as well as an aesthetic choice (22). Ashcroft’s “gap” is already present where language shapes thought and thought reshapes language. Rather than serving a metonymic function, code-switching that introduces words of Indigenous languages to a mostly English text can work as an inclusionary device, since “[I]loanwords, code-switching and code-mixing also create a sense of solidarity, intimacy and group membership” (Russo 50). Rather than exclusionary on the basis of ethnicity, such texts are inclusionary on the basis of shared linguistic (or research) skills. The foreigner who makes the effort to look up a word in a dictionary when a glossary is not provided is rewarded with limited access to the text, with just enough knowledge to become aware of how much they do not know. Finally, authors may also use code-switching “to legitimize Indigenous languages and affirm culturally and spiritually centered wisdoms embraced by Indigenous peoples, as well as to validate [themselves] as Indigenous storytellers” (Kunnie and Goduka ix). The presence of Indigenous words within the English narration is a form of resistance to colonial annihilation efforts and “a claim to power” (Tusitala Marsh, 1999 347).

As a novelist, Wright uses her mastery of English in a self-reflexive way to question its legitimacy and meaning-making ability. Thus the narrative voice of *Carpentaria* ponders after the arrest of three petrol-sniffing Aboriginal boys accused of killing a white guard: “‘They got their just deserts.’ They got their just deserts? You could spend the rest of your life examining those five words, change the sound, bend them, twist them up, even change it into something like: Just deserts! They got theirs. Like eggs. Hey!” (Wright 308). The author is not merely calling attention to the artificiality of the English idiom, but also reconfiguring its meaning in a way that

posits the arrest as an absurd act of retaliation against the Pricklebush community. *Carpentaria*'s Aboriginal characters display a keen awareness not only of what is "proper" English but also of how to speak it "properly." Norm is the prime suspect in the killing of Cyclone, a member of Midnight's Eastside mob, and his family are called as witnesses in front of the court: "Norm's blood relatives testified as sober people with bent heads. They never frightened the judge or any of the Australian law because they spoke their English calmly, which they knew would not frighten white folk, who never liked black aggressors" (Wright 155). Aware of respectability politics of and what they could gain by adapting their behaviour to match white expectations, the Phantoms distance themselves from the "black aggressor" stereotype and manage to convince the white judge to dismiss the case against Norm.⁶¹

Through questioning English while simultaneously using the language to its full potential, Wright enacts a decentring not dissimilar to that of Hulme. Dever argues that, in Hulme's work,

English ceases to represent the dominant linguistic discourse against which others are defined or dismissed but becomes itself an other, balanced against the indigenous linguistic self. Through this decentring, Hulme creates a sense of counterbalancing or dialectic opposition, suggestive not of assimilation or syncretic possibility, but of an on-going dynamic or debate. (25).

The debate between SE, Indigenous englishes, and Indigenous languages takes the form in both novels of a tension leading to a refusal of reconciliation, as the question of language is complicated by the use of Māori and Aboriginal words and modes of discourse within a mostly English narrative.

3.1.2 *Te Reo Māori*

⁶¹ See the following discussion of race and respectability politics:
<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-rise-of-respectability-politics> (accessed 23 Nov. 2015).

Language is a much-politicised issue in New Zealand, an officially bicultural and bilingual country, and using English and te reo in a situation of conflict or harmony is therefore often interpreted as a way for the author to take a stand on the wider issue of the cohabitation between the two peoples. Writers such as Grace, Ihimaera, and Hulme have radically different approaches to the issue of establishing Māori traditions in English-language prose (Simms 225; Gadd 62). In *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*, Tony Deverson states that “the growth of literary writing by Maori, as one of the manifestations of the Maori cultural renaissance, has brought both significantly more native vocabulary into literary use and greater acceptance of Maori as an integral part of the language of New Zealand literature” (397). Māori words are now a common sight in New Zealand literature written by both Pākehā and Māori authors, te reo is taught in state schools, and the establishment of kōhanga reo, or language nests, in particular has revitalised Māori as a first language through immersion and intergenerational transmission. Nadine Millar, a Māori woman who tried to send her mixed-race children to kōhanga reo despite her own lack of language skills, explains that

language is not the end game. It’s communication. Most of us are not learning Māori to become masters of linguistics. We’re learning so that we can make a connection with people. Not so we can show off our skills, but as a taonga to pass on to our children. It’s about whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships), belonging, identity.⁶²

The Māori concept of whakawhanaungatanga resonates with the notion of intersubjectivity, which as Millar states can be recovered and strengthened by learning Indigenous languages.

Māori writers use te reo in various ways within their English narration. In *The Whale Rider*, Ihimaera translates Māori words in the text and includes a scholarly glossary “to create a type of Maori vernacular English that invites the linguistic outsider into the discourse” (2003 4; Allen 156). Indigenous words are mostly used in *The Whale Rider* to refer to local animals, gods, and rituals, but a few key Māori words for feelings and things that are not normally part of the Pākehā experience are

⁶² See the full article here: <http://e-tangata.co.nz/news/nadine-millar-dont-let-perfect-be-the-enemy-of-good> (accessed 20 Nov. 2015).

also used. When a word or phrase in te reo is not immediately followed by an English translation, a reader with no prior linguistic knowledge may still understand it. Grace on the other hand deliberately chooses not to provide glossaries in her later works, but many of the Māori words in *Potiki* are understandable thanks to their context. Roimata thus asserts three times: “we were not pohara,” then lists her whānau’s hardships and how they overcame them (1987 105). Pohara translates as poor, but she chooses the Māori word to indicate that pohara in the Māori sense is not exactly the equivalent of poor in the English sense.⁶³ The English-speaking reader can never be sure of guessing correctly however, and Grace sustains this uncertainty throughout the novel (1987 71).

She goes a step further in ending her novel on a more opaque note: “[t]he text’s final two pages, where Grace guardedly seals off her deeper, cognitive subject by concluding with a passage written entirely in Maori” give no indication about their narrator or their meaning (Fuchs 183). Yet even non Māori-speaking readers reach the end of their journey through the book and have built up a mental glossary enabling them to recognise some words. This is not enough to translate the text accurately, but what was once foreign has by now become familiar (Grace, 1987 184-5). Grace comments on her use of Māori words:

I want my writing to be able to stand with the rest of the writing of the world without encumbrances [...]. I use Maori language in my work where I believe it is right and natural to do so, where the people that I’ve created demand that I do so because the words are their words. I do not italicize because the words are not “foreign” to me or my characters and are indigenous to my country. (1999 71-2)

This seems in contradiction with Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin’s argument that non-English words are a way of inserting difference, or Powiri Rika-Heke’s statement that “Maori words and phrases, often without translations for monolingual anglophones, are used, and stand for the latent presence of Maori culture. [...] Cultural difference is, therefore, not inherent in the text but is inserted by the use of such strategies” (155). For Grace, te reo is the natural expression of

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=pohara> (accessed 07 Apr. 2011).

what feels right for the author and her characters resulting in making the non-Māori reader the Other.⁶⁴

Hulme makes extensive use of Māori dialogue between the protagonists of *the bone people* as in the following example: “‘E tama, ka aha ra koe?’, he says” (1986a 282). Māori is the language of phatic communion and cheerful exclamation when Joe hears that Kerewin will join him at the pub. But it is also the language of the extremes of joy and distress for Simon: “It was Maori, like Joe when he’s in a good mood at home, or in a bad mood and wants to yell me out with other people around” (1986a 177). Māori provides the language of scolding that the father uses with his son before realising that Kerewin can speak it too, and the language of healing when Joe bandages Simon’s foot after he slips on a sharp stone (1986a 57). It also serves the social purpose of enabling secret communication between Joe and Simon when they are around non-Māori people, although the mute child cannot answer by the same channel. This may account for Sarah Shieff’s remark that “the exception to the narrative suspicion of spoken language is te reo Maori, which is used at moments of greatest emotional intensity, and denotes a special level of sincerity in interpersonal connection” (154). However, Joe’s endearments in Māori do not prevent him from exerting extreme violence on his foster son, nor is te reo considered a solution to the many communication problems in the novel.

Hulme’s approach to Māori is often playful and makes us fathom the depth of understanding missed by non-Māori readers, as when Kerewin renames Simon Peter Gillayley: “Simon Pi Ta Gillayley, and translate that how you like – I can think of fifteen meanings for ta, and quite a few for pi, but only one of each that fits” (1986a 238). Pi Ta is both a phonetic approximation of Peter and a Māori collocation. The reader is never certain of what Kerewin means by that statement, but we know that our relative ignorance influences our reading of Māori literature. I therefore argue that Hulme, like Grace and Ihimaera, withholds as much as she offers despite her different approach to language. Talib remarks that Māori authors in general do not shy away from opacity in their writings and take a rather uncompromising stance and

⁶⁴ Although Grace explains that she sometimes uses SE to stand for formal Māori (Keown 2000).

“do not care too much if their works are not understood by the Pakeha and by other nationalities” (66).

It is significant that, like Grace in *Potiki*, Hulme chooses to end *the bone people* with a phrase in te reo: “TE MUTUNGA – RANEI TE TAKE,” which she translates in her glossary as “the end – or the beginning” (1986a 445, 450). The appearance of indecision about the completeness of the novel and its form are grounds to compare the spiralling shape of the novel to that of whaikōrero, or Māori speech-making.⁶⁵ Poia Rewi defines whaikōrero as “a discussion of the encounter between two entities, *tangata whenua*, the hosts, and *manuhiri*, the visitors; followed by a description of the *marae* as space” (38; original emphasis). Like the host and the visitors, the author and the readers engage in a coded conversation within the physical space of the book, and the rituals of formal speech-making and novel-writing are dependent on the adoption and/or subversion of formal linguistic conventions.

While the text of *Carpentaria* speaks for itself, so to speak, preceded only with a dedication page and followed with a page of acknowledgements, *the bone people* opens with a preface and closes with a glossary, both controversial features frequently found with postcolonial fiction. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note that “[e]ditorial intrusions, such as the footnote, the glossary, and the explanatory preface [...] represent a reading rather than a writing, primordial sorties into that interpretative territory in which the Other (as reader) stands” (60). By explaining the text they direct the readers’ interpretation and mediate our encounter with the text. Yet this paratextual role is subverted by the fact that Hulme herself, rather than a white editor, authors the preface and the glossary, so that both can be read as part of her novel. Indeed the preface recounts a dream Hulme had, and the glossary is incomplete and subjective, deliberately leaving out the translation of some Māori words and commenting on the taste of various foods. In the 2002 revised edition of *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin remark that “[g]lossing is far less prevalent than it was twenty or thirty years ago” (60). Decrease in the use of

⁶⁵ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Māori attitudes to time and the cycle/spiral nature of time in Māori epistemology.

paratextual explanatory cues associated with postcolonial literatures appears linked with an increasing refusal on the part of non-western writers to make concessions for a predominantly western readership. I am inclined to agree, even though the 1984 publication date of *the bone people* and the author's rejection of editorial intrusion appear to contradict this evolution. When compared with most Māori and Aboriginal novels published at the same period, such as Sally Morgan's heavily edited and endorsed *My Place* analysed in Chapter 4, the difference in the framing of the texts by an Indigenous author in the former and white editors in the latter is striking (Huggan, 2001 170).

Hulme introduces her reflection on the bicultural linguistic landscape of Aotearoa/New Zealand from the very beginning in Kerewin's internal monologue when she comments (before she gets to know Joe) on his extensive use of the punctuating term "fuckin": "You hate English, man? I can understand that but why not do your conversing in Maori and spare us this contamination? No swear words in that tongue...." (1986a 12). It may be that te reo is the "clean" vehicle of an "uncontaminated" culture, but the ellipsis tells a different story.⁶⁶ The reason behind the absence of swearing could be that Māori culture does not consider sexual intercourse taboo, therefore evading the most fertile source of obscenities in the western world. Kerewin goes on: "I believe the poor effin fella's short of words. Or thought. Or maybe just intellectual energy," immediately assuming Joe's lack of intelligence because of his swearing (Hulme, 1986a 12). Swear words and non-standard English forms also serve as metonymies for acts of rebellion against the authority and normativity of English by subverting it as a literary and artistic medium. Talib notes: "the f-word is seen as an emblem of a more extensive dialectal usage and as significant in the conflict with the colonial inheritance" (36-7). Although Kerewin rejects the term "fuckin" as the sign of a limited vocabulary and intelligence, her own logorrhoea reveals an uncanny facility with innuendo and

⁶⁶ When mentioning te reo, it is important to remember that it is an Indigenous language shaped by the colonial introduction of literacy and alphabet. Hulme remarks: "the missionaries (the first people to use Maori as a written language extensively) were based in the North Island and assigned sound values to letters according to what was current speech there" (1981 295). This led to the disappearance of several South Island dialects and pronunciations subsumed under one standardised Māori dialect as transcribed by early Christian missionaries.

scatology, notably when she is startled by Simon's gesturing and exclaims: "Sweet apricocks and vilest excreta" (Hulme, 1986a 27).

The narrative convergence of Māori and English to create literature serves several roles, from asserting the validity of the Indigenous language to the possibility of harmonious co-habitation between local and imported languages. It is also a way to claim the vitality of Indigenous languages since "[t]he inclusion of Maori language emphasizes the coexistence of that language with English, as a living language" (Rika-Heke 155). Māori as a living language keeps evolving with its speakers and providing them with a valid and updated symbolic system for future generations to use.

3.1.3 Aboriginal Languages

Of an estimated 250 Aboriginal languages spoken on the Australian continent at the time of the arrival of the British, only 90 are extant today, most of which have less than 100 speakers, and only 20 are still spoken in their full form (Blake 5). When mentioning Aboriginal languages, we must bear in mind that there was more pre-contact linguistic diversity on the Australian continent than in the more spatially limited islands of Aotearoa. Speakers of dialects from different Aboriginal language groups would not have been able to understand each other, as opposed to the relative proximity of Polynesian languages across the Pacific Ocean. Different languages mean different ways of defining oneself and one's people, for example the word Bama is used to refer to an Aboriginal person in North Queensland, while it is Murri in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, Koori in New South Wales and Victoria, and Nyoongah in Western Australia (Moore 15). Contact between Aboriginal languages and English has also given birth to several creoles such as Kriol, spoken mainly in the north, and AE spoken nation-wide. Nowadays "[t]hese English varieties are the mother-tongue of the majority of Indigenous Australian peoples," who often have some proficiency in their tribal language and can speak AuE as well (Russo 45).

In the mid-19th century, before the period of forced assimilation, Aboriginal people started writing letters, petitions, but also poems and essays in English, thus adapting traditional forms to the new language (Russo 43). The colonisers gradually took control of the entire continent and imposed institutions modelled on the British system, including conducting all business in English and committing physical, cultural, and linguistic genocide. The mission system ensured that Aboriginal people there were cut off from ancestral land and dispossessed of their traditions, and as Eve Mumewa Fesl recounts, “[p]unishments such as beatings or withdrawal of food were meted out by many missionaries on Koories who did not conform with their rules not to speak Australian languages” (83). Forcing a choice between physical or cultural sustenance led families to interrupt the transmission of Aboriginal languages between generations, and ensured that most children on missions grew up with little or no knowledge of their parents’ languages. For mixed-race Aboriginal people who wished to be exempted from the 1905 Aborigines Act and its provisions, “[r]enouncing Indigenous languages was part of the exemption,” as was renouncing association with other Aboriginal people including family members (Russo 17). Loss of language was concomitant with loss of community and kinship, although efforts are now being undertaken to preserve and revitalise endangered Aboriginal languages.⁶⁷

The extinction of many Aboriginal languages did not result in the disappearance of all Aboriginal words altogether, and Russo notes that “denial of the Indigenous cross-fertilization of Australian Englishes and literatures is arguably part of the colonial amnesia of Indigenous-non-Indigenous contact and cohabitation” (6). Indeed, in an essay collecting Queensland Aboriginal words used in AuE, former director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre Bruce Moore remarks the following:

Ironically, the voices of many dead languages live on in the language of the culture that destroyed Aboriginal languages and cultures. These are

⁶⁷ Researchers have designed smartphone apps to record endangered Indigenous languages: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-28/phone-apps-used-to-save-endangered-indigenous-language/5847640> (accessed 18 Nov. 2015). Digital knowledge management tools have also been produced to serve the needs of Australian Aboriginal communities in terms of collective memory making and transmission (Verran et al. 129).

the words that were borrowed into Australian English from Aboriginal languages. Australian English borrowed about 450 words from about eighty Aboriginal languages throughout Australia. Most of the words borrowed refer to things (flora, fauna, landscape features, etc.) that the colonisers had not encountered before. (6)

These words have made their way into AuE via linguistic cross-fertilisation, and some, such as kangaroo and dingo, even made it into SE, the very language that sought to replace Indigenous languages.

In Wright's novel, arguably "the technique of switching between two or more codes – the co-existence and movement across different varieties of English – is deployed to represent the internal differentiations of a small town of the Gulf of Carpentaria" (Russo 57). The narrative voice adapts to the characters, alternately formal and colloquial, borrowing from languages indigenous to the Gulf country as well as high modernist western experimental prose in order to reflect the cognitive conflicts faced by Aboriginal speakers of multiple languages and dialects. Despite these transformations and transmutations, *Carpentaria's* narrator remains the linguistic anchor of the text, the authoritative "Waanyi English of the omniscient narrative voice [that] is proactive in foregrounding indigenous epistemologies and knowledge systems and controlling the point of view of the novel" (Russo 57).

The relative opacity of the language is particularly explicit in the expository narrative. For Ashcroft,

inaccessibility is part of a strategy of difference. [...] This principle applies to even the most culturally specific terms. Although there is no word in English, for instance, which has the associations of mana (oneness with the world) in Polynesian or Tjukurrpa (the 'Dreaming') in Pintjantjatjara, there is no insurmountable conceptual difficulty in articulating their associations. (2001 71-2)

Considering what we have already established regarding the extent to which language influences our way of comprehending the world, his remark that "there is no insurmountable conceptual difficulty in articulating" mana or Dreaming appears particularly inaccurate. In addition, his definition of mana is wrong and the term

actually means power or prestige.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Alison Ravenscroft argues that in *Carpentaria* “[w]e can’t assume [...] that because the narrator uses the lexicon of the Indigenous sacred at one moment (Serpent, Spirit, Dreaming) and the lexicon of modern geology, meteorology and marine biology in the next that [...] the language of modern science is a translation of Indigenous sacred terms such as the Serpent” (78). English words such as “Dreaming” are already translations of Indigenous words and therefore always imperfect to represent Indigenous knowledges.

If there is an unbridgeable gap in articulating such concepts, it is not an essentialised or racialised one. Rather, it is due to the way early childhood learning of language and social behaviour determines cognitive patterns and pathways. For an adult raised by western parents, it is too late to learn to grasp the full extent of concepts that are deeply linked with Indigenous cultures.⁶⁹ In *Carpentaria*, navigator extraordinaire Norm has an almost supernatural affinity with the sea, which Uptown notices but fails to understand:

the old white people in Desperance who had sat around miserably for many wasted years, trying to translate the secret conversations Norm had with the heavenly spirits at night. They will never know. Those white folks believed that if they could learn how to translate the voices of the stars, their sons would be safe at sea too. (Wright 229)

Norm’s kinship with the sea can be read as a metaphor for the novel itself and Aboriginal writing in general. Wright is telling us that white readers can either “sit around miserably for many wasted years” hoping to understand the secrets of Aboriginal cultures, or accept the incommensurability of the Aboriginal experience and be grateful for authors who mediate their Indigenous identity and traditions through English literature to some extent. In Russo’s words, Aboriginal texts “stage the irresolution, or liminality, of cultural translation, the existence of all those elements of culture which resist the containment of Indigenous languages in

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mana> (accessed 20 Nov. 2015).

⁶⁹ It is my contention that this is the case even for white anthropologists who spend decades living among Indigenous people

speaking and writing in English” (61). One such element is orality, which is paramount in cultures where literacy and colonialism are intricately linked.

3.1.4 Orality and Orature

Carpentaria and *the bone people* retain not only traces of Indigenous languages, but they also use traditional forms inherited from orature, or oral literature, as well as non-written means of expression and communication. There is no intrinsic conflict between orality and literacy, and most Indigenous people were quick to adopt writing, as Hulme remarks: “many early European settlers record the eagerness of Maori people for this kind of learning” (1981 295). Positing a fundamental difference between oral and written cultures, or between nomadic and settler societies, would deny the formers’ right to change and the freedom of their members to adopt whichever external influences they choose while rejecting others as they wish. Russo notes: “orality and writing are identified through their other. They have always existed in a symbiosis which is ultimately not a binary opposition but an intertextual relation” (89). This relation can be harmonious or oppressive, but it is always present since both modes of communication define each other as what the other is not. If “verbal art and writing are different kinds of performance” then neither exists independently of the performer as speaker/writer (Russo 94).

The adoption of writing has deeply modified traditional art forms and the way Indigenous people relate to words and their power. As Ashcroft puts it, “unlike spoken discourse, the central problematic of studies of writing is absence” (2001 61). Without the presence of subjects producing and receiving utterances, language appears to lose most of its relational aspect. Indeed, where the spoken word needs a speaker and a recipient, the written word needs only a sender and a material medium of expression. The absence of a receiver and the impossibility of knowing whether there will be a receiver mean that relationality is more difficult to establish in the written text. Ashcroft adds that postcolonial writing often attracts attention to this by “install[ing] distance and absence metonymically in the interstices of the text” (2001

62). These interstices are akin to the cracks where meaning exists for Hulme, highlighted in contrast with the linguistic excess of the text. Ashcroft concludes that by “freeing the language from the contingent situation, writing, paradoxically, gives language its greatest permanence, whilst, at the same time, giving meaning its greatest volatility because it opens up wider horizons of meaning” (2001 63). Meaning is volatile, unstable, and changing, a paradox that challenges notions of the permanence of the written sign and the materiality of the page.

Māori oral tradition involves repetitive, incantatory rhythms and refrain-like proverbs that punctuate the stories. Traditional forms of Māori orature include the recitation of whakapapa, or genealogy, waiata, or lament song, karakia, or prayer, and whakatauki, or proverb (Rika-Heke 148). Māori proverbs “create metaphors from central traditions [...] to represent the necessity of new generations fulfilling the vital roles of the old – of new generations becoming, in effect, ancestors” (Allen 146). This role of transmission and education is present in *the bone people* when the dying kaumatua, or elder, tells Joe “haere. Mou tai ata, moku tai ahiahi,” meaning “go, the morning tide for you, the evening tide for me” (Hulme, 1986a 357). The elder who has reached the end of his life convinces the younger man that the latter still has things to accomplish in his life. The title of the novel is illuminated by a pun towards the end of the novel: “E nga iwi o nga iwi,” which Hulme translates in her glossary as “o bones of the people” or “o people of the bones” (1986a 395, 450). At this point in the text the mention of skeletal remains could be interpreted as a *memento mori*: a reminder that the bones of the past make the people of the present, just as the people of the present make the bones of the future. The transmission of traditional knowledge plays a part in the repetition of the stories, not least because “as long as human beings know, and then articulate, their histories, physical destruction can be reformed into a continuous spiral of cross-generational, ongoing narratives” of Indigenous survival (Fuchs 178). The recurrent motif of the traditional Māori spiral throughout Hulme’s narrative illustrates this idea of constant renewal driven by transmission.

The importance of spoken language is emphasised by frequent dialogues in *the bone people*, yet as Sarah Shieff remarks, speech, “usually regarded as a marker

of authenticity, authority and ‘presence’ over and above the printed word (a second-order system of sign substitutions denoting absence), comes to mean something rather different in the novel, in the light of Simon’s muteness” (153). Simon understands at least three languages (English, Māori, and some French) yet he speaks none. He is frequently spoken for by other characters, treated as if he were cognitively impaired as well as mute by adults, and his characterisation demonstrates “an awareness of the power of the dominant discourse to eradicate difference” (Fee 27). When Riley notes that “[s]mall talk is a big deal,” he alludes to the essential role of language learning in the construction of identity and selfhood in child development; children who are not taught language, as in the case of those raised by wolves, subjects to experiments, or victims of abuse and neglect, tend to struggle to establish relationality (133).

Across the Tasman Sea, Wright is also concerned with patterns of speech and voice, most evidently in the way *Carpentaria*’s Pricklebush voice, Uptown voice, individual Aboriginal and white characters, and the narrator, regularly interrupt each other. The aptly named Will refuses to be “a captive audience” to the Irishman Father Danny when the latter is driving him: “[t]he sound of a human voice, even if it was his own, seemed to help Father Danny’s concentration on the road” but “[s]o many good words were wasted that day as Will Phantom stared past kunbulki and into the past itself” (Wright 192). Will escapes from Father Danny’s oral prison not by retreating into himself, but by looking beyond language and into the cryptic “past,” an ability no doubt derived from his knowledge of Aboriginal traditions.

Silence is not only the prerogative of the Aboriginal characters, as exemplified by Desperance’s small-town mentality and obsession with keeping the state capital’s police out of their affairs: “the silent word spread the usual way [...] through word of mouth” (Wright 314). The paradox of an instruction to keep quiet travelling via speech highlights the role of silence in the novel. For an oppressed population whose voice has been suppressed and ignored for over two centuries, silence takes on a rather different meaning. For Hulme, “part of the reckoning is listening to the conversation. It’s the same way you can use silence and pauses in the printed word to convey something” (Sarti 59). Silence is the part of a conversation

dedicated to listening and thinking, as opposed to talking and acting. In Wright's text, speech is also negatively associated with mob mentality and Uptown's desire to lynch the three boys: "[i]t was the kind of talk that got everyone revved up and excitable. Volatile language was used" (316). Language incites violence and allows it to be carried out.⁷⁰

However, Kerewin also depicts language as a potential fortification against violence when she wonders "What about korero, Joe? What about our tribe's famous talk-it-out with all concerned?" (1986a 273). A collective discussion involving the whole tribe, *kōrero* allows for grievances to be heard and solutions to be found that bypass uncontrolled aggression. Discussion is how people learn to form relationships with others, and this too starts in the early years of childhood development, for "descriptive and experimental evidence shows that Primary Intersubjectivity is a genuine two-party communication that depends on the mother adapting to the infant and infant adapting to the mother" (Trevvarthen 43). If we replace "mother" with primary care-giver, then foster father Joe helps Simon build intersubjectivity through conversation, while paradoxically breaking him with violence.

The link between language and violence in *Carpentaria* and *the bone people* illustrates the power that language – an immaterial concept – wields on the material world. This is especially salient in Indigenous writing for "[o]ral cultures function on the assumption that the word creates its own object – an assumption which [...] clashes with the epistemology of writing, in which words are believed to be merely referential and descriptive" (Rask Knudsen 42). There is an incantatory nature to the spoken word, capable to name and to summon, to make real what is imagined and to make present what is absent. This ritual function of language is still prevalent in oral cultures, although orature is "not as powerful a force [...] as it once was as it is usually only on occasions of large family, tribal or other formalized gatherings that the real beauty of the oral literature is given voice" (Rika-Heke 149). In Māori culture, the power of language would be performed during traditional ceremonies on the *marae ātea*, or open area in front of the *whare whakairo*, or meeting-house.

⁷⁰ This is similar to Kerewin allowing Joe to beat Simon over the phone after the boy kicks her guitar. She later acknowledges: "I flayed him with words," breaking his mind with words before Joe broke his body with blows (Hulme, 1986a 326).

Hulme describes the marae as a place where “[t]here would be people talking in their sleep, someone practising an old song in the background; it would be mixed up, patterns of language weaving into one another” (Sarti 58). The image of language as woven threads emphasises its role in binding people together and its ability to be torn and re-woven.

Literature plays a similar role, especially for Hulme who refers to herself as “both a visual and an auditory kind of writer” (Sarti 59). The auditory quality of *the bone people* is noticeable through the numerous dialogues and in the experimental narration toying with line breaks and rhymes. Hulme succeeds in transposing elements of orality into the written text by creating a haunting linguistic style that lingers even after the reader has put down the physical object of the book. This is the phenomenon Cathie Dunsford alludes to when she mentions that “it is the nature of an oral language tradition to keep on working behind the scenes even when the reader has left the text” (16). From the pages of the book the word enters the mind of the reader and settles there to re-colonise it on behalf of Indigenous knowledges. Similarly to Simon who “can store any sound he wants to, and duplicate it inwardly,” the reader’s ability to store and ruminate upon Hulme’s text is largely due to its roots in orality (1986a 73).

3.1.5 Music and Song

Characterisation and plot development are developed by the multiple voices of the narrators and characters. In *the bone people*, the mute child Simon is paradoxically the one who has the closest relationship with music, as his ability to sing testifies, while in *Carpentaria* Norm’s voice is ascribed with supernatural properties. Pacific cultures centre orature and performative poetry at the heart of artistic production, and in particular Pasifika poetry, created and performed by members of the Pacific Islander diaspora in Aotearoa/New Zealand, attempts to reclaim the marginal position occupied by performance poetry in mainstream literary

study.⁷¹ Tusitala Marsh asserts in her essay on the Polynation performance poetry project that “[f]or many Pasifika poets already familiar with traditions of orality, it is the sound and movement of voice and body that comprises a central aspect of an engaging performance” (2010 211). The voice comes from the body and links language with the materiality of the body. Her essay itself “moves the text away from the centre of study and interpretation and repositions it as one of several vantage points that are considered along with the visual (performance) and the auditory (vocal, stage sound)” (Tusitala Marsh 2010 202). The performance aspect of the text is central to Indigenous cultures even in written form.

Moreover, Hulme reminds us that, in Māori traditional orature, “[w]aiata (a term covering both songs and poems generally) were of many kinds” (1981 290). Waiata associate voice and music, and serve a social role by enabling the transmission of culture from the older to the younger generations. Thus, not only do humans and animals use song in *the bone people*, but the ghost with a moko, or facial tattoo, who visits Simon at night sings a waiata oriori, or lullaby (Hulme, 1986a 252). Song is not only the medium but also a metonymy for culture: “[d]oubtless our songs will change as we come into contact with different people, different ways of living. They have done so in the past. They will again” (Hulme, 1981 208-9). As a social group changes over time, its songs evolve to reflect its changing needs. The idea that specific sounds function as cultural metonymies is shared by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, who note that “the sounds and the textures of the language can be held to have the power and presence of the culture they signify – to be metaphorical in their ‘inference of identity and totality’” (51). If the song is inference of identity, then the singer embodies the link between language and culture passed down from the dead and remade by the living. Singing even has more authority than speech in certain Māori contexts, as Rewi notes that song traditionally closes speech-making on a marae and can be used “to end a speech that the group accompanying the speaker feels does not do them or their cause justice” (153).

The protagonists of *the bone people* have a distinct relationship with orality: “Simon expresses himself in eloquent silence, Kerewin with an extravagant

⁷¹ Pasifika is a self-defined term created to acknowledge Pacific-centric differences.

vocabulary, and Joe through ‘proficiency’ in violence” (Rask Knudsen 135). All three also have conflicted identities, with Kerewin having one Māori grand-parent but feeling all Māori and defensive about her ethnicity, Joe raised between a Māori grand-mother and a Pākehā grand-father who did not see eye-to-eye on education matters, and Simon found on the beach with no other indication of who he is other than his white skin. Kerewin’s overblown language can be read as a constant justification of her mixed identity through artificially adopting the languages of both her Pākehā and Māori ancestors, while Joe is locked in a vicious cycle at the extremes of love and violence, and his language is similarly alternately emotionally articulate and replete with expletives. Simon’s silence, on the other hand, reflects the opacity of his origins, the ignorance or deliberate concealment of his past. The fact that all three manage to create a community and communicate together is revelatory of the role of language – and silence – in the formation of intersubjectivity.

In addition to the voices of the main protagonists, Hulme’s narrator dispenses commentary on the action, and Dever credits it with “[a] quality of uneasiness [...] in that dissonant secondary voice within, the voice of the ‘snark’ who provides a callous, bitter, and often savage commentary on events” (28). The narrator is often indistinguishable from Kerewin’s inner voice, which shows her difficulties relating to others. Susie O’Brien suggests that “the relationship of an artist-protagonist with a mute child [...] may be seen as metonymic of the writer’s interrogation of language and concomitant revision of the dialogue between self and other which constitutes the artistic exchange” (79). Like the gallery visitor who looks at paintings – or the reader of a novel – the mute child cannot provide detailed feedback, so Kerewin must make an effort to open (and keep open) channels of communication between her and Simon.

Indeed, for dialogue to be successful Simon needs to be treated as an equal discussion partner, otherwise he disengages from the conversation when adults attempt to speak for him. For instance, when Joe tells Kerewin about the time Simon threw a glass at one of his Tainui cousins and was beaten, “[t]he boy has the non-expression on his face again. Utter disinterest” (Hulme, 1986 81). Although this passage could be interpreted as Simon’s disinterest in his own physical wellbeing,

like when a distraught Catholic brother mentions him laughing while getting strapped, in the context of Simon's muteness I propose to read this behaviour as a way of stepping out of a conversation he feels excluded from by Joe speaking on his behalf (Hulme, 1986a 404). Simon's muteness prevents him from speaking, yet as we will see in a later section he expresses himself fluently through a language of hand signals, written notes, touch, and facial expressions. Upon learning of his impairment, Kerewin initially calls Simon "[a]n inarticulate child, a tongue-locked mind" and it takes her some time to realise that spoken words are not the only valid means of communication (Hulme, 1986a 95).

Before discovering that he can sing, Simon's only way to vocalise is through screams, so he builds music hutches "in order to exteriorate the music within him in a material object that works as an extension of his self and offers relief to his troubled embodiment" (Heim 66). The role of the music hutch, a contraption of debris found on the beach, is an extension of Simon's self through which he can express his music and listen to it reflected back to him, which highlights the importance of his sense of hearing. At the end of the novel, when Joe realises that Simon is nearly deaf following his last beating, the man mourns "I've taken away his music..." (Hulme, 1986a 443). Joe's violence has in fact taken away the boy's ability to receive his inner music reflected back to him by instruments and voices. Simon discovers that he can sing when he is alone on the beach at Moerangi and kills a wounded bird with a stone to end its suffering: "he sits back on his heels, keeping his mind dark, and sings to it. It is a thin reedy sound at first, nasal and highpitched. It is the only sound he can make voluntarily [...] and it is as secret as his name" (Hulme, 1986a 236). His singing for the dead bird is reminiscent of the use of waiata in Māori culture to mourn the departed at a tangi, or funeral. The association of song with death is reinforced by Kerewin calling Simon "[t]he boy entombed in deafness" when he awakens from coma (Hulme, 1986a 319). According to her, losing hearing, that is one's receptivity to spoken language, is similar to death as it severs ways of communicating with others through sound.

In *Carpentaria*, Norm's voice acts as background music for much of the novel. Even the Phantom house seems designed to carry it, with its "long curving

corridor which resembled the shape of a cochlea inside an ear. Inside this ear the sound grew louder as it travelled” (Wright 114). Even the town of Desperance is aware of the power of Norm’s voice despite the scant attention they pay to Pricklebush fringe-dwellers:

Norm had plenty of voice for calling out to the whole world when he wanted to. He possessed such an enormous voice the pitch of it could reverberate up and down the spinal cord, damage the central nervous system, and afterward vibrate straight up the road to the town and hit the bell so hard it would start ringing its ear-piercing peal. (Wright 96-7)

In Indigenous epistemology, the fusion of real and unreal in this quotation does not necessitate generic labelling such as magical realism, and the narrative accepts Norm’s power as matter of fact (Ihimaera, 1991 53-4).

As an impoverished Aboriginal man in rural Australia, his voice is Norm’s only power, and he makes deliberate use of it when talking over the sound of the storm like a Black King Lear (Wright 269-70). Nature is louder than man but Norm keeps challenging her, and his tragic heroism will not allow him to abandon a fight he knows he cannot win. The stormy wind becomes the voice of “the sea lady” with whom Norm has a shouting match (Wright 260):

Norm tried to understand the barrage of her verbosity by choosing at random names to slot into rows in the crossword puzzle of forgotten history. As the puzzle grew larger, forming new offshoots, she would jump in front, too smart like, trying to squeeze in her own words, but Norm knew the game better and would keep crossing her out with the right word. [...] She continued trying to distract him by calling out the names of all the dead people he had ever known. (Wright 261)

Their verbal jousting involves Norm’s awareness of his ancestors and culture in order to sustain “the game” played by the storm.

Other characters use their voice to communicate through song information usually associated with writing. Thus Midnight gives Will directions to a hiding place in song:

The old man gave him the directions to the safe place in his far-off country – a blow-by-blow description sung in song, unravelling a map to a Dreaming place he had never seen. [...] He went on and on, fully believing he was singing in the right sequence hundreds of places in a

journey to a place at least a thousand kilometres away. ‘Sing this time. Only that place called such and such. This way, remember. Don’t mix it up. Then next place, sing, such and such. Listen to me sing it now [...]’ the song was so long and complicated and had to be remembered in the right sequence. (Wright 372)

The map is drawn in song, and Midnight’s instructions to Will are to sing to the country so it will let him pass. Song is a secret way to communicate with the country that is passed on orally from the older to the younger generation.

As well as the voices of the people and the sea, the voice of the land makes itself heard in the Gulf of Carpentaria and respond to the Aboriginal characters. As Ravenscroft astutely frames it: “[a]t times *Carpentaria* is a libretto, at others a requiem, at others it follows the lyrics and rhythms of country & western, and then again refers to sounds that elude me: the country’s own song” (71). After the explosion at the Gurfurrit mine, everything is silent and still for a moment, until a man in Mozzie Fishman’s convoy speaks:

The sound of this young voice being the first sound was a relief for the others who had been thinking they were listening to the sound of their own deafness. However relieved and pacified they were to hear speech, everyone kept listening, listening for what else remained missing – Ah! It was the noise of the bush breathing, the wind whispering through the trees and flowing through rustling grasses. (Wright 408-9)

The voice of the land then responds to the men’s silent plea:

They heard things they had never heard before. The ghostly poem, summoning the spirit tribes, swept past them as they moved down into the battleground of the spinifex flats. The ode unfolded seasons and months of wind, rain, storm, sun, night owl, swarming flying ants, crows, eagles, dingos, dung beetles, flies, and fish spawning. (Wright 429)

Here is the poetry of nature eating away the corpses of the mining men shot and charred by Will’s rescue operation, as the recovered voice of the country begins to rebuild and repopulate the ruined world.

In contrast to his father Norm, Will is a listener of people, of the land and of nature, keenly aware that “[a]ll day and night the wind played ancestor music” (Wright 455). The ancestors are indistinguishable from the land itself; they speak to Will through the wind and act as a medium of communication between the dead and

the living. Beside, “he was no more than a song sung like an estuary fish. [...] He could see the song was being performed by a mythmaker fly with operatic voice, creating impromptu notes” (Wright 454-6). Will’s protean abilities allow him to become a fish sung by a “mythmaker fly” representing the author weaving him into her narration, as Wright’s narrative weaves its web between real and unreal. The voices of the men also cross over one another with Norm intruding into Will’s narrative when the latter travels “where predetermined knowledge dwelled from a world full of memories, told, retold, thousand upon a thousand times from the voices of all times, through his father’s voice” (Wright 457). Will listens to the ancestors speaking through Norm’s voice, the dead speaking through the living.

Multiple voices are often considered a feature of postmodern fiction, but as Rask Knudsen remarks, “[t]he coexistence of many voices – what postmodernists term a ‘polyphony’ – is not a sign of a postmodern *crisis* in author-ity; it is a sign of the *order* of oral and communal storytelling conventions” (59; original emphasis). Indeed it would be unethical to apply generic labels uncritically to Indigenous literatures born of oral cultures where voices play a specific role. In addition, I argue that we must go beyond the concept of polyphony to consider that of symphony in an Indigenous context. In *Carpentaria*, the interweaving of voices speaking through each other does not denote coexistence as much as the merging of different voices singing together in harmony: in music theory this is called a symphony. The characters, the narrator, and the natural world form a macro orchestra playing the symphony of the book, while the inner voices form the intimate orchestra playing the symphony of the self. The presence of music in the texts and the musicality of the novels highlight the musicality of language and human thought. Through borrowings from western art such as the Classical symphony and merging arts like music and literature, Hulme and Wright re-create not only a new language but also a syncretic literary canon based on traditional orature from the past and looking towards a decolonial reinvention of the future. The origin of language, whether written, spoken, or sung, is in the body of those who produce text and those who receive it. Colwyn Trevarthen deplores the fact that linguists working on the structure of text have “forgotten that the origin of [grammatical] rules is in the dynamic of human body movement” (“Musicality of language”). In Indigenous women’s writing the body is

both racialised and sexualised, it is the seat of spoken and sign language, and the metaphorical repository of language.

3.2 Body

3.2.1 Racialised and Sexualised Bodies

The Indigenous body has consistently been overwritten in western colonial discourse, with the Māori body constructed as a receptacle for western fantasies about a hyper-sexual paradise peopled with noble savages, and the Aboriginal body declared repulsive and primitive, hardly more desirable than the beast (Keown, 2005 2-3; Moorehead 101; B. Smith 329). Both were and are victims of deeply entrenched prejudice focused on the racialised physicality of Indigenous people.

Tattooing and body marking for example are forms of writing on the body in the Pacific and can be seen as “visible assertions of cultural identity” following a pattern of initiatory testing through pain and healing, thus echoing the novels themselves and the process of colonisation (Prentice, 2005 116). Māori moko is chiselled into the skin with an uhi instead of punctured with a needle, and in pre-contact times the term designated traditional markings for high-rank Māori: “Identity was marked on the body” (Tylim 2). The kaumatua Joe meets in *the bone people* exemplifies this tradition by having “a true archaic moko” (Hulme, 1986a 346). It tells Joe that the kaumatua is in touch with Māori tradition, and although the younger man cannot read the moko, he recognises it as a marker of Māoritanga, or Maoriness. By becoming the kaumatua’s heir, Joe therefore becomes his spiritual heir and reinforces his own relationship with his Māori heritage and identity. To counter the lonely throes of Kerewin’s self-reflexive language, Hulme invokes alternative forms of communication involving the body and physical aspects of human interaction. Haka, or dance, is emblematic of this for it engages the community. After Joe loses his son and his friend, he reflects: “this lone dance is wrong [...]. Even in hell there should be lines, ranks of sinewed legs beating down beside mine. Ka mate, ka

mate...” and appeals to the Māori collective body to join his dance (Hulme, 1986a 340-1).⁷²

In *Carpentaria*, the focus of the narrator is on the black bodies of the Phantom family, and in particular Wright’s descriptions of Will. In hiding after sabotaging pipes belonging to the Gurfurrit mine, Will spends most of the novel striving not to be seen or heard and escaping his own brothers Donny and Inso who work for the mine. When they got close to his hiding place, Will “ran as a wild zigzagging animal in full alert to danger, knowing it was being hunted down, became like rubber flexible, bouncing, too hard to catch” (Wright 174). Through these comparisons Will turns first into an animal, then into plant rubber, until he becomes at one with the country and his transformation is complete: “Will Phantom is mud” (Wright 181). The black body becomes the black earth because he wills it to be so, while his brothers who sold out to the white man have lost the ability to see or hear him: “It was a wonder [Donny and Inso] did not hear his thoughts. [...] Will heard his thoughts leaping out of his mind so loudly, he believed they were hanging around in the heavy humid air, like illuminated balloons” (Wright 176-7). Neither Will’s silent body nor his noisy mind and solid thoughts give him away to his brothers.

Will’s father Norm is aware of the power of language and the different effects of the English language on black and white bodies:

he tried again to recite the [Lord’s] prayer, before stopping to linger once again on the perplexing word *trespass*. Trespass had been a big word in his life. It protected black men’s Law and it protected white men. It breathed life for fighters; it sequestered people. The word was weightless, but had caused enough jealousies, fights, injuries, killings, the cost could never be weighed. It maintained untold wars over centuries – *trespass*. (Wright 266; original emphasis)

The rules against trespassing may protect Aboriginal Law in theory, but in practice they protect mostly white men’s bodies and property. The different naming of black and white bodies by Uptown also shows the hypocrisy of blood quantum labels

⁷² The haka, known over the world as the dance the All Blacks rugby team performs before each game, is also what many tourists to Aotearoa/New Zealand expect to see and seek. Despite the risk of exoticising cultural practices, it is easy to find Māori-owned and Māori-organised performance groups in the tourism industry who perform the cliché that cannot be effectually fought off as a way to regain power over representation.

through the erasure of whiteness as a racial marker, as Aboriginal Desperians are “[w]hat Uptown liked to call tritaroon, quadroon, octaroon, full blood, or if speaking about themselves, friends and neighbours” (Wright 317).

In *the bone people*, Kerewin’s body offers a striking example of a use of language that is both racialised and sexualised, although this is complicated by the fact that she admits to being biologically one-eighth Māori and asexual, leading her to challenge 1980s New Zealand racial and gender roles. Simultaneously Māori and white, feminine and masculine, verbose and distrustful of language, Kerewin is Homi Bhabha’s mimic (wo)man and Shakespeare’s Caliban, not-quite-white but who dizzyingly masters the white language (1994 86-89; 2002 act 1 scene 2). As a self-defined Indigenous woman (like Hulme herself) Kerewin’s relationship with the English language and its associations of colonialism and patriarchy is highly significant. She is very articulate and possesses a vast knowledge not only of Māori traditions but also of world cultures, crafts, and religions. Her language may be overblown and artificial, but Kerewin is not uncritical of her own logorrhoeic tendencies, as she writes in her diary: “*So I exist, a husk that wishes decay into sweet earth. Writing nonsense in a journal no-one ever sees*” (Hulme, 1986a 261; original emphasis). She calls her clichéd pseudo-Romantic prose “nonsense” and consigns it to a journal that is not destined to be read because this is a language that is not meant to be shared in a communicative act, but is focused instead on the solipsistic expression of the self.

Keri and Kerewin, Hulme and Holmes, are also women who seek to challenge commonly held beliefs surrounding language and femininity. Julie Penelope remarks:

All women need to find a way to subvert the inherited order of being spoken for. One need only look at the verbs that describe women’s speech to ascertain the attitudes of those who make language: “chatter, prattle, gossip, nag, wheedle, babble, chat, prate, natter, gush, cackle, blather, dither, blab, blabber, gibber, jabber.” (xiv).

Those who “make language” are primarily men, and thus women who use language must resolve this inherent tension in terms comparable to Indigenous people who use English. Dunsford points out that, “[I]ike Maori and Aboriginal writers, lesbian

writers [...] acknowledge the importance of pushing at the boundaries of accepted language and exploring new languages in the process of reclaiming lost tongues and redefining new ways of expression” (11). Although Kerewin does not define herself as lesbian, her asexuality places her outside sexual norms in the same way as same-sex attraction would, and as such it allows her to place herself outside of sexualised language. Indeed she reclaims *te reo* as part of her identity but also creates new modes of language suitable to express her difference: “yer got yer one great invention, remember Holmes? The neuter personal pronoun; *ve/ver/vis*, I am not his, *vis/ve/ver*, nor am I for her, *ver/vis/ve*, a pronoun for me” (Hulme, 1986a 425-6). Incapable of building her own subjectivity with the conventional parameters of the English language, Kerewin reappropriates it to escape the limiting labels “his” and “her” in order to become an “I” that stands beside the existing identities of “his” and “her.” This is reminiscent of what Radhika Mohanram and Gita Rajan call “the *imprint of language* in constructing subjectivities and the nuances or synchronous tensions among the colonizer, colonized, native, foreign, male, female subjects, which exceed clear dichotomies of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (3; original emphasis). All the tensions above are contained within the “I” Kerewin produces and expresses in her language.

Kerewin’s revelling in the potentialities of spoken language to be (re)modelled to accurately serve the speaking self is interrupted by her rejection of the language of touch, in which Simon on the other hand is proficient: “he holds his hand out, reaching for hers. She gets up quickly, forestalling the contact. ‘You’d better have a wash, eh. I mean, I’m going to. Before drawing. Grease and chalk and charcoal don’t go well together.’ Babbling again, Holmes. He’s not contagious” (Hulme, 1986a 71). Kerewin attempts to replace touch with words, but the uncharacteristically short sentences and monosyllabic words are signs that this strategy is becoming ineffectual, and that her usually articulate prose has become mere “babbling.” The breakdown of linguistic competence for Kerewin reaches its apex upon meeting the “creature” in the hut in the woods when she suffers from a mysterious tumour: “‘Kkkik,’ says Kerewin, meaning Yes” (Hulme, 1986a 424). Even the simple affirmative is impossible to utter at this stage. The creature offers a counterpoint to her new inarticulateness as “[t]he whispery hoarse voice has no

accent: a flat papery enunciation of words” (Hulme, 1986a 424). Androgynous and racially ambiguous, the creature’s language does not reflect its origin or belonging, and the words accompany a mysterious brew that restores Kerewin to health. This episode is a turning point in her narrative; both because of her awareness that language has failed her, and because by agreeing to drink the creature’s potion Kerewin allows it to come close enough to her for intimate contact and ingestion.

3.2.2 *Touch and Sign Language*

Physical contact is one of Simon’s main channels of communication in *the bone people*, as it is an essential way for him of showing affection and holding a conversation. As Joe explains, “he thinks he can cajole and explain and talk his way out of all kinds of trouble with his kisses. Like they’re part of language” (Hulme, 1986a 25). Kisses and cuddles replace speech as part of the mute child’s language. Not only is he incapable of speaking, but also the boy does not feel a connection to conventional language: he “doesn’t know the words for what they are” (Hulme, 1986a 395). This could be linked to him developing a mistrust of language from previous abuse before Joe found him, and the memory of “the vivid haunting terrible voice, that seemed to murmur endearments all the while the hands skilfully and cruelly hurt him” (Hulme, 1986a 5). The voice surfaces in Simon’s nightmares and is directly linked to physical anguish when the “voice grows and echoes, and the pain intensifies” in his nightmares (Hulme, 1986a 204).

Communication by touch in an oral society is a permanent battle for Simon, whose efforts often lead to uncontrollable violence. Joe explains that “he’ll fight you to make you understand. It’s his last resort, spitting and kicking [...] he’ll do his damndest to punch into you what he wants to say” (Hulme, 1986a 60). Fighting is an extreme version of the language of touch and the equivalent of shouting for the language of words. Joe adds that “[i]f you won’t listen after that, or you fight him back, he’ll despair, and literally throw himself on the ground. [...] It is sheer frustration and despair that you won’t listen, you won’t converse, when he’s got

something to say that's important to him" (Hulme, 1986a 49). His explanation of Simon's communication system mirrors the boy's behaviour when he attempts to communicate, rises to anger, and collapses in defeat. Kerewin witnesses this reaction when Simon tries to tell her something about school:

He stops, searching for a word, his teeth clenching in exasperation. [...] He grinds his teeth. [...] Then he nods. Shakes his head. He is actually shaking all over with the effort of trying to find a way to show what he wants to say. [...] He hits the table with the pencil and it breaks. Point smashed. He puts his face in his hands" (Hulme, 1986a 70)

Simon's frustration at the failure to express himself leads to violence (the destruction of the pencil) and defeat (putting his face in his hands).

Halfway between touch and speech, breath is another one of Simon's alternative languages and it is exemplified by the Māori practice of *hongi*. The verb means to smell or sniff, and the noun refers to greeting someone by pressing noses and foreheads and sharing breath.⁷³ For Hulme it is a very important part of Māori social interaction as it precedes speech: "what you do generally is *hongi* and hug; words come a long way after; body language is going on, which is extremely important. Words, imagery, touch, that kind of 'communicative silence'" (Sarti 60). Breath is Simon's compromise with Kerewin, although he does not believe in its reality or its power and prefers his "communicative silence." When he feels her tensing after touching her hand, he "blow[s] into her ear. A whole stream of names that is. Do you like them? [...] It was just air, see? he'd thought hurriedly, my hand was more real, see?" (Hulme, 1986a 126). Words are as inconsequential as air, and dissipate as quickly, while hands are material and lasting. As we have established, song is an exception to this, but even before Simon can sing he is aware of the life-giving power of breath as he dreams of finding mummified baby rabbits in a hole:

you start feeding them music, underbreath singing, and little by little the withered leathery ears fill out: flick flick, a tentative twitch and shake. The dead dried fur begins to lift and shift and shine. Those sunken holes of eyes and nostrils pinken slowly, like a blush stealing over, the eyes to

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=hongi> (accessed 12 June 2014).

moisten, darken, the nostrils to quiver, and then they open their eyes on you and they glow. (Hulme, 1986a 203)

Simon's underbreath singing, his breath, revives the rabbits and turns back time, just as Joe's breath revived him the day he was found on the beach and gave him his second birth.

Beside physical contact, speech also includes gestures. As Alphonso Lingis remarks, "[s]peech is made not only with the mind, but with the voice and kinesics that is supported by the whole body posture. Speech acts are themselves movements, centerings, gestures" (47). Like words, movements and facial expressions only make sense if they are seen and interpreted according to the same system of signifiers. In *Carpentaria*, Norm uses sign language profusely to communicate with his family:

he would appear behind the backs of people he did not like, using hand-signal language at a rapid speed to say whatever derogatory stories he wanted about them, to the utmost embarrassment of his children. *Never trust this bat-eyed dog. Tell this smelly piss trousers to get going. HE IS AS USELESS AS A BROKEN-BACK SNAKE. Tell him to piss off.* The banter of hand language subsided only when he got them to do what he wanted. (Wright 200; original emphasis)

His children are passively receiving Norm's gossip and orders but Wright provides no explanation as to how they understand him. Does the Phantom family share a secret communication device or is Norm using an Aboriginal language based on hand signals? Communication through sign language is complicated further in the following silent dialogue between Midnight and Will:

"What are you doing there?" he asked Will with a flick of his hand. "Going home," Will replied with sign language. "But! Big cyclone coming, boy, everybody *barrba, jayi, yurrngi-jbangka* – you better come with us," old Joseph again indicated with his hands. "Can't. I am going to find Bala and Hope," Will replied. [...] "*Ngamiri*. Nobody told me. Everyone *kayi*. Big fella coming this time – I heard them, *barraku* talking. Cover the town. Everything will go. Listen to the ocean. Soon, *Warawara yanja nagwu ninya lajib*." "All right, old Malbu – until next time," Will replied. "Your *damu* daddy too. Where *ninji Murriba* – who knows? Until next time, *baki, yarrbanji*." (Wright 466-7; original emphasis)

Midnight warns Will about the oncoming cyclone and informs him that the Pricklebush people are being evacuated along with the townfolk of Desperance. No

detail is given as to how Midnight and Will share a secret means of communication, but what is even more striking is the heavy use of Aboriginal words by Wright to translate their hand signals. Indeed, if we exclude speech markers such as “he said” from the dialogue, there are 18 Aboriginal words out of 77 words in total – nearly 25% Aboriginal words – therefore much more than in any other dialogue in the novel. This discrepancy would suggest that gestures are less influenced by English and colonial practices than speech, and therefore more suited to secret communication. Like his father Norm, Will chooses to use sign language to avoid being seen and understood by someone else than his chosen interlocutor.

In *the bone people*, on the other hand, Simon is forced to use signs as default replacements for spoken words. This does not mean that muteness impedes his intellectual development, however, as Trevarthen remarks that “[w]hen speech floods the child’s mind at the age of two, there are already abundant categories of meaning that have served both interpersonally and pragmatically in preceding months” (1988: 54). Meaning precedes language, although Hulme withholding Simon’s age forecloses the possibility of analysing his character more fully within a child development psychological framework.

During her first meeting with the boy, Kerewin must reassess the way she habitually communicates with others. Simon does not use New Zealand Sign Language, the third official language of the country alongside English and Māori.⁷⁴ Instead he has developed his own alphabet, which he shares with Joe and attempts to teach Kerewin, starting with signs for yes and no. During his first stay in the Tower she tries to read him: “[h]e pantomimes while she ponders aloud, ‘Sleep? Definitely sleep... okay, did I sleep? Nope? Where did I sleep? Nope? O, did I have a good sleep?’ Impatient fingers, Yes, Yes, Yes” (Hulme, 1986a: 38; original emphasis). Most of their subsequent conversations follow the same pattern: Kerewin makes suggestions and Simon signs “yes” or “no.” Her patience is a far cry from her initial reaction upon realising that he was mute: “‘I don’t understand sign language,’ says Kerewin coolly. A rare kind of expression comes over the boy’s face, impatience compounded with o-don’t-give-me-that-kind-of-shit” (Hulme, 1986a: 19). His

74 Only since 2006, so over 20 years after the novel was released.

disbelief possibly stems from the assumption that everyone understands signs, as opposed to spoken language. Simon's non-verbal communication leads Kerewin to reflect on the links between words, intonation, and gesture, and how they create a message together:

One of her family used to say, 'And the rain was fairly pissing down.' It conveyed exactly how the weather was, 'And ther rain' (shaking head slightly) 'was fair-lee *piss* (grimace and smash fist through the air) 'sing down' (eyes wide with surprise at the violence of the rain). The gusto, the singsong level and fall of the speaker's voice made it real. (Hulme, 1986a 22; original emphasis)

She realises that favouring one mode of expression over the others is insufficient to make the thing described "real" and that gestures are integral parts of language, enhancing the communicative process.

This explains why the refusal of communication is expressed through bodily movement in the novel. When his uncle Piri picks up Simon from the Tower instead of Joe, Kerewin observes how "[t]he boy folds his arms and spits on the floor" (Hulme, 1986a 42). By folding his arms he closes his body to show his disappointment and prevent communication with either adult. At the end of the novel, Simon develops a coping mechanism to prevent communication with himself and his hurtful memories. When he wakes up from coma in a hospital bed, he thinks: "Binny... wait. With a new keen instinct for self-preservation, he stops thinking about the windows right then" and later "Joe kicked... stop it there. [...] He won't let it overwhelm him" (Hulme, 1986a 387, 388). By controlling his thoughts and memories, expressed in words in his mind, Simon can protect himself from the pain of language.⁷⁵ This refusal to listen to his internal voice becomes a refusal to listen to the rest of the world when it becomes clear that he will not go home: "[h]e stopped communicating. [...] It was a wall he had built in one night" (Hulme, 1986a 395). Simon's self-inflicted isolation, removing his hearing aids and pretending not to notice hospital staff's attempts to communicate, functions as both a barrier and a weapon, reminiscent of accusations of deliberate obscurity levelled at Indigenous authors such as Hulme who do not explicitly write for a non-Indigenous readership (Thompson 7-8).

⁷⁵ This is similar to Sue Wilson's use of dashes to replace Rog's rape in her narration in Chapter 1.

3.2.3 *Corpus and Corporeality*

If the individual body produces language through speaking or writing, language in turn produces the collective social body, and the way individual and collective bodies relate to each other is reshaped by language. Thus in ME:

[n]icknames and kinship-related terms deriving from Maori cultural norms are additional ways in which Maori ethnic identity may be signalled lexically. Terms of address such as *mate*, *bro*, *sis*, *cuz*, *nanny*, *aunty*, and *uncle* are frequent in conversations in relaxed social contexts between Maori family and friends, and serve to index Maori identity by reflecting Maori language and cultural norms within NZE. (Holmes, Stubbe and Marra 439; original emphasis)

In addition to signalling the ethnicity of the speaker, the use of the above terms of address underlines the place of kinship in Māori culture, which shapes Māori language and social interaction, and how it has been transposed into English, thus reshaping ME and NZE. Through the linguistic interference of the Indigenous language, ME reflects structures of intersubjectivity specific to Māori culture.

As we established earlier, in their seminal study of postcolonial literatures Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin deny the possibility of language embodying culture and claim that it would be essentialist to argue thus (52). This is disregarding the way culture and language mutually transform each other, with language acting as a tool that reinforces the social body. They add that “[a]lthough language does not *embody* culture, and therefore proposes no inherent obstacles to the communication of meaning, the notion of difference [is often as] *constructed* in the text as that of identity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 56).⁷⁶ Their wording suggests that this is a conscious, deliberate act on the part of the author who artificially introduces her identity and difference into the text. Without ascribing motivations to the author, it would be worthwhile acknowledging the myriad ways in which native language and culture influence the cognitive processes of the writer. The notion of difference is

⁷⁶ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin decide to emphasise the word *constructed* while I emphasise *embody* to highlight the link between language, culture, and the body.

already established in the way we position ourselves and perceive the world through our native language, for “[w]hat can be said in one tongue cannot be said in another, and the body of what can be said and what cannot be said necessarily varies from tongue to tongue and according to their relations with each other” (Deleuze and Guattari 24). What cannot be said in a given language means that the culture traditionally associated with this language does not need to name it, and therefore it is not explicitly recognised.

For an Indigenous woman, writing in English is not without tension, as we already acknowledged, and not least because, as Fanon puts it, “[t]o speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (38). It is wearing another’s identity on one’s body as well as adopting another’s point of view. Maurice Merleau-Ponty develops a sense of place from lived bodily experience and the perception of the environment and material objects from physical sensations. He writes that “[t]he body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment” (2002 94). Thus, Fanon and Merleau-Ponty would agree that language plays an important part in shaping the way the body relates to itself, others, and the space it moves through, be it the textual space of the novel, fixed in print yet moving in words, or the outside world. Paul Connerton on the other hand views the body as “a spatial field, and the pilgrim is, at every stage, located: where locatedness refers mainly to mobile actors rather than to things” (18). The body exists in space and is located yet mobile; accepting this idea of movement and locatedness, flow and fixity, is fundamental to studying the primary texts in this thesis.

In *Carpentaria*, the mobility of the human body within the body of the text is suggested, although Wright never provides the reader with any explanations. After the three Aboriginal boys hang themselves in their jail cell, ultra-violent mayor Bruiser, who whipped the children earlier that day, “saw the three boys running after him” (Wright 360). It becomes clear that death does not mean that the boys are not present as ghosts. Bruiser enters a bar and has an altercation with the white barman Lloydie, suspected to be the father of one of the boys:

‘You are going to die for this,’ Bruiser whispered, dragging Lloydie closer by his T-shirt, so he could speak softly into his ear. Lloydie looked

shocked, for what he had heard was the thin voice of a boy coming out of Bruiser's mouth. Everyone heard Bruiser speak like a boy and thought it was a horrible miracle. [...] Those boys were working like angels – it was the only way of explaining it in the white man's tongue. (Wright 360)

The white man's tongue has no word for Aboriginal boys speaking through the mouth of the mayor. It is not English *per se*, but English as spoken by European Australians, that fails to formulate this transfer of voice in cogent terms. The mention of angels is ethnocentric and inadequate to explain such an instance of transcorporeality. The boys inhabit the land that belongs to them as they belong to it, just like they inhabit the text, seeping through its pages although we know them to be dead, and inhabiting the bodies of other characters. Bruiser's violence, embedded in his very name, cannot reach the boys once they have departed from their individual bodies to melt into the body of the land and the body of the text.

In *the bone people*, Hulme displays a different awareness of the links between language and the body at narrative level as well as in descriptions of scenes of violence. The layout of words on the page, the use of blank space, italics, and indented sections of text give an impression of both freedom and constraint echoing the protagonists' internal turmoil. The frequent shifts in narrative focus can be seen as undermining the novel's integrity and unity, turning the text into a mosaic of paragraphs of interior monologue, dialogue, and description expressing feelings of isolation and alienation. Joe and Kerewin's bodies in particular are proficient in the language of physical violence when they fight each other on the beach. Hulme writes of Kerewin's "body smoothly assuming a stance of defence," her fighting style as fluid and economical as her narration and leading to Joe's feeling of inadequacy: "[h]ow did she move so fast? It feels like I'm swimming in glue" (Hulme 1986a 190-1). His behaviour during the fight also reflects his language, more vernacular and not as polished as Kerewin's.

The reconciliation of the three protagonists is inscribed in the text, although it is clear that language is failing to express how three people can form one body. Simon knows that words to describe their new intersubjective reality are lacking: "[n]ot family, not whanau... maybe there aren't words for us yet?" (Hulme 1986a

395). However, the new body of the tricephalos, the clay head with three faces that Kerewin makes and bakes in the fire of her Tower, is created through language itself in the beginning-that-is-an-end; the novel's prologue recounts events posterior to the epilogue where "they [Simon, Joe, and Kerewin] have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new, something strange and growing and great" (Hulme, 1986a 4). Hulme's language is performative in the way it creates a common corporeal identity while describing it. The heart, muscles, and mind work together as part of a syncretic body despite occasional disharmony. Although Hulme uses the metaphor of the family as a body created through language and mediated by it, the author is aware of the deficiencies of languages, both Māori and English, to reflect the new sociosomatic reality of Aotearoa/New Zealand and its people.

The loss of language is linked with the death of the body in *the bone people*, particularly when the dying kaumatua "cries out in a loud voice, something that is guttural and archaic and incomprehensible to Joe. The chant rings in the gorge, an echo dying seconds after the last word has been called out" (Hulme, 1986a 369). His last words linger on after they have been spoken, further indicating that language is the first thing that is lost as one is about to die, yet it is the last thing that remains after one has died, for language and body reshape and signal each other's presence in the land.

3.2 Country

In *Practices of Proximity: The Appropriation of English in Australian Aboriginal Literature*, Russo discusses what she sees as "the conflict between the 'country,' which has expanded its semantic value to encompass the indigenous spiritual connection to the land, and the non-Indigenous use of the term 'land', which refers to non-Indigenous claims of property" (52). In AE, "country" has a broader definition than "land" for it encompasses notions of home, ancestors, spirituality, and nurturing. Mick Dodson defines country as "all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its places," and Russo adds that

“[i]n the different ways of inhabiting place, namely the country and the land, lies the ‘incommensurability’ of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures” (2003b n. p.; 52). A discussion of the gap of experience between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is central to analyses of language and place, but in this chapter I will use the terms land and country interchangeably instead of putting the two in opposition.

3.3.1 Local Metropolis and Global Village

Indigenous people’s relationship with the land has been disrupted by colonisation, displacement and dispossession, making it simultaneously more arduous and more crucial to express a sense of place in literature. The paradox of doing so in English complicates this paradigm even further, with Indigenous writers attempting to seize “the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place” (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 37). Language is adapted to place yet the authors are aware of the tension implicit in projecting a foreign system onto a native environment. Indeed, land and language are two major concerns of postcolonial literature because both notions have been fundamentally affected by colonisation. For Nathaniel O’Reilly, “when we talk of place, language, and history, we are talking about a contentious struggle between ways of seeing, ways of naming, and ways of narrating memory, but they all fall into the orbit of a struggle over representation” (20). Both language and land are linked with issues of self-determination and identity, to the point of being sometimes used as metaphors for each other and serving allegorical functions. The land is the material base for a culture and it carries a meaning for the native people that is not accessible to others. For Ashcroft, it is also the repository of language, or something that language can be projected onto, as he suggests that “in preliterate cultures the processes of reading the signs of the land in tracking, hunting and gathering are already well advanced. [...] Clearly reading had existed for millennia before the development of writing, but such reading could not exist without the presence of various forms of inscription” (2001 79). This form of literacy of the land has been ignored at best and depreciated at

worst by European colonisers, who often place higher value on other forms of writing such as inscriptions on paper or stone, yet alternative forms of writing and reading the land have always been present and influence language (Ashcroft, 2001 67).

The connection between language and place is of particular concern for Indigenous people all over the world (Lawrence and Dua 127). The sense of the land communicating with the people and giving them language can be deduced from Aboriginal linguist Jeanie Bell's remark that "[p]eople who've been fortunate enough to remain in their land usually have been able to be strong enough and isolated enough and together to retain their languages" (163). This connection also serves to disrupt settler identification and attempts at indigenising the English language. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, W.H. New explains that, by the 1970s, Māori people increasingly rejected assimilationist policies:

declaring themselves both linguistically and literarily, they found ways of asserting to European society the set of cultural attitudes built into the Maori language, parenthetically making Europeans' identification with 'the local' more complex, requiring them to identify with another people and cultural attitude as well as with landscape and distance from England. (153)

Claims of Indigenous identity steeped in a particular locale and language represent a threat to the legitimacy of the settler polity and its attempts at legitimising settler culture to justify the exploitation of the land (Turner 35). For Māori people, "[l]and is not an exploitable resource: it is *Papatuanuku*, earth mother. It used to be traditional for the placenta of a newborn child to be buried in the child's tribal area so that the newborn would later know that [s]he was truly part, truly nourished, and truly born out of this place" (Hulme, 1981 302). The land is the mother that gives birth to the people, who in return owe her protection and care.

The sense of place in *Carpentaria*, set in the eponymous Gulf country in North-West Queensland, is also complex and linked with traditional Aboriginal conceptions of the land. The people belong to the place, rather than the opposite, and also have a duty of care towards it. Angel sees herself as a custodian of the land:

[s]he welcomed those who walked heavy with the inheritance of antiquity stashed in their bones. Pride swelled up inside her when she saw those with a landscape chiselled deep into their faces and the legacy of ancestral creation loaded into their senses. She guarded those whose fractured spirits cried of rape, murder, and the pillage of their traditional lands. (Wright 27)

Angel can read the land in the people who carry with them a history of dispossession and bear the physical marks of this severed relationship. Here Wright deploys “a narrative tactic that enables [her] female characters to explicitly assert their Aboriginality through a relationship to a specific Indigenous land and ‘truth’ that form an integral part of a proud emergent identity” (Ichitani 198). Although the Pricklebush people are a displaced people who lost their own ancestral land, through contact with more recently displaced people Angel re-establishes her own connection to the land and her Aboriginality by proxy. Furthermore, Bell remarks that “[o]ur languages are the voice of the land, and we are the carriers of the languages” (170). The three poles of language, people, and land reflected in the organisation of this chapter on voice, body, and country are interdependent and the relationships between people, including descendants and ancestors, and the environment reflect the significance of language in Indigenous literature.

The different attitudes to place of Aboriginal and white characters in the novel are reflected in their different attitudes to language. For example, Father Danny’s monologue as he drives Will towards Desperance is contrasted by the latter’s silence: “[t]he priest did not see silence by acquiescing to silence. For him, the land opened his crammed mind. ‘Out there a man can get a chance to let some of the good ideas escape into the wilderness,’ he claimed” (Wright 191). This is typical of many white people in Australia to call non-built environment “the wilderness,” and to use what they see as empty space as a sounding-board for their own ego. For Will, however, the land remains an unexpressed, ineffable entity with which he has a deep personal and cultural relationship. It is to be listened to, rather than spoken at. These contrasting behaviours are to be found in the town of Desperance itself epitomising “a seemingly local symbolic Australian contact zone where the ‘mismatch’ of settler and Indigenous paradigms of culture and identity are represented through the co-existence and encounter of Australian varieties of

English” (Russo 57). Silence and verbosity, like SE and AE, represent apparently competing ways of relating to the land, yet both reveal a certain sense of place and of the speaker’s relationship with it.

A discussion of the sense of place in Indigenous literature must contend nowadays with discourses of globalisation. The Pricklebush people living on the edge of Desperance are aware of the increased interconnectedness of world interests and industries, as their battle against the Gurfurrit mine shows. They even encounter snippets of western technology that they do not fully understand, and which induce paranoia among the Pricklebush people about their words being stolen, a justified concern if one remembers Australia’s history of cultural theft as well as material dispossession. With new technologies:

Your words could end up being a thousand miles up in the sky riding on a satellite disc, zapping across the world on invisible beams. [...] It was some kind of gadget that can take away all your myall words, transcribe what you say in better language so people can understand what you are talking about. And then the beam flies on orbiting through space, straight to the boardrooms of rich multinational mining people in Holland, Germany, the USA, even ‘Mother’ England, or who knows where, to listen to you, before you have even had a chance to end your sentence. (Wright 99)

The mining company controls telecommunications and creates a distorted sense of place where the language spoken by Aboriginal people on Australian ground is “bettered” before being broadcast overseas. Language is severed from both land and body, a process initiated by colonisation and gathering speed in the age of globalisation. One way for Indigenous people to reclaim the connection between language, culture, and identity is to negotiate globalisation’s twin pressures of cultural homogenisation and the demand for authenticity.

3.3.2 *Cartography and Colonialism*

It is impossible to discuss place and identity in Indigenous writing without examining cartography as a palimpsestic practice of naming, re-naming, and

asserting colonial power. In her comparative study of Aboriginal and Māori literature, Eva Rask Knudsen argues that Indigenous authors “strive to present new maps of Aboriginal or Maori belonging that are sketched from old traditional maps” (318). Literature as the remaking of maps according to traditional models, as opposed to colonial ones, is a tempting theory, but one that also seems rather simplistic. Arguably, the concern with mending the severed bond with the land is widespread in Indigenous writing. Rask Knudsen notes that, “[i]n the same sense that the resurrection of the meeting-house is the most dominant metaphor of cultural restoration in contemporary Maori literature [...] the drawing of mental maps of Aboriginal being is now becoming the emblem of cultural resurrection in Aboriginal literature” (23). In *the bone people*, once Kerewin is cured of her stomach tumour, she returns to her whānau’s home marae and takes on the task of rebuilding the ruins. Beyond the symbolic image of rebuilding the traditional Māori meeting-house to revive Indigenous culture, this has a very personal meaning for Kerewin, who destroyed her Tower earlier in the novel and lamented the broken relationship with her family. Rebuilding the marae with a functional whare whaikairo is a way to set up new foundations upon which to revive her family bonds, especially as she works on the building-site herself and hires local tradesmen from her iwi.

As we have seen, in *Carpentaria*, Midnight sings to Will a mental map of the country “to a Dreaming place” where he can hide (Wright 372). Midnight does not need to have seen the map to recite it since it belongs to him and his people. He is the anti-explorer who has no need to rename the country in order to know it. The first explorers who set up to chart the Australian continent according to western methods returned to white society with maps that would pave the way for the advances of land-grabbing settlers. Geographer J.B. Harley remarks that, “[a]s much as guns and warships, maps have been the weapons of imperialism” (282; original emphasis). The first maps were weapons in the frontier wars and instruments of control over what was then considered unknown, empty space. It is worth noting that there was an ideological dimension to this myth, since “[r]epresenting the Australian continent as a silent space, travellers and engineers of the eighteenth century’s colonial project claimed that it was their scientific duty to name the Australian continent” (Russo 20). Mapping is intricately linked with western culture’s core tenet of the objective,

scientific pursuit of knowledge prevalent since the Enlightenment. The link between language and place is apparent in the mapping practice of naming geographical features, since the “map is a palimpsest of names that inscribe possession” (O’Reilly 29). Its palimpsestic nature means that it is constantly evolving following changes in the landscape and political changes, but it also impacts the very thing it sets to describe.

Yet the inability of the English language to describe such foreign experiences as the Australian landscape and climate is the ultimate irony for the language that has now colonised the entire planet as the Earth’s most spoken by second-language speakers.⁷⁷ Its inadequacy soon became obvious to British Australian writers, who wondered:

How to describe Nature as movingly as the Poet Laureate Mr. Wordsworth, when nature was all wrong: vast deserts, [...] animals that seemed to have been made up as a joke, and a terrifying variety of poisonous snakes, deadly spiders, and bloodthirsty sharks, as well as an invisible jellyfish whose agonising sting can kill you in five minutes. (Tranter 86)

Although here in jest, John Tranter employs a self-deprecating rhetoric that is symptomatic of many white Australians’ relationship with the country. This attitude consists in manipulating language to express the idea that, on the one hand the land is harsh and inhospitable to life, and on the other that it is theirs and that they alone can face its deadly traps, prosper and thrive. Such problematic “attempts at severing English from its original motherland and creating a postcolonial Australian identity through language” are compounded with attempts at containing the landscape within a new Australianised English (Talib 61). Talib rightly remarks that “New Zealand English is more strongly influenced by Maori when compared with the influence of the Aboriginal languages on Australian English” (65). There may be a visible trend in using Aboriginal place names and terms for fauna and flora, but contrary to Māori this has not been accompanied with schooling in Indigenous languages, or even a more porous relationship between them and AuE.

⁷⁷ <http://blog.esl-languages.com/en/esl/most-spoken-languages-world/>

Over the past decades, there has been a movement in Australia towards re-naming places to acknowledge previous ownership of the land and Indigenous naming systems. As Russo remarks, this has taken an inordinate amount of time: “[d]enial about the existence of pre-invasion Indigenous mapping systems is so deep-rooted in Australia’s national self-representation that disputes over place names did not take effect until the High Court Mabo (1992) [...] Native Title decisions declared the colonial claims of *terra nullius* to be false” (19). Only after the judicial debunking of the *terra nullius* doctrine in the 1990s was it possible for Aboriginal nations to bring up arguments for place name changes through official channels. It can be argued that reinstated Indigenous names of environmental features and sacred places of spiritual significance “serve the purpose of indicating a pre-existing knowledge of the country and of re-establishing a link with places of belonging” (Russo 52). This link with the land, which was severed in many instances, will not be restored through symbolic gestures alone, but in so far as it acknowledges the validity of Aboriginal epistemology, this trend is significant of sincere attempts to right the wrongs of the past by linguistic means. Yet official renaming does not guarantee a change in mentalities. Birch gives the example of the renaming of the Grampians National Park in Victoria as Gariwerd: “[t]he National Park will be officially known as The Grampians (Gariwerd). The Koori name is therefore linguistically subordinated, ‘handcuffed’ in parentheses” (235). Not only is the Koori name bracketed like an afterthought, but it also remains to be seen how many locals and visitors have started calling it Gariwerd.

The renaming of places to substitute the colonial name with an Aboriginal term may come as a token of good will, but without consultation with local Indigenous communities it risks turning a gesture of reparation into insensitive parody. In *Carpentaria*, the ceremony to rename the river that runs by Desperance “from that of a long deceased Imperial Queen to ‘Normal’s River’” is the occasion for such a parody (Wright 9).⁷⁸ As mentioned earlier, Norm has an affinity with the sea and the river admired by Uptown, who decide on the new name:

⁷⁸ There is a waterway called Norman River in the Gulf of Carpentaria, possibly Wright’s inspiration for Normal’s River.

Traditional people gathered up for the event mumbled, *Ngabarn*, *Ngabarn*, *Mandagi*, and so did Normal in a very loud and sour-sounding voice over the loudspeaker in his extremely short thank-you address, although those who knew a fruit salad full of abuse in the local languages knew he was not saying *Thank you! Thank you!* and belly-laughed themselves silly because the river only had one name from the beginning of time. It was called *Wangala*. (Wright 9-1; original emphasis)

The river's only name has always been Wangala, so its naming as (most likely) Victoria River as well as its subsequent renaming as Normal's River are public displays of white ignorance and arrogance. Although Uptown expects the Pricklebush people's gratitude for renaming the river after one of their members, they only get mockery in a scene that reveals Wright's pessimism towards ill-advised reparation efforts.

More often still than misdirected gestures, the white majority tends to reject outright the renaming of places respecting Indigenous mapping. Lawrence and Dua remark in the Canadian context that "[s]ettlers find a remapping of traditional territories to earlier names, boundaries, and stories by Indigenous peoples to be profoundly unsettling. It reveals the Canadian nation as still foreign to this land base" (127). This is also true of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, whose legitimacy is threatened by the official acknowledgement of the illegality of colonisation as well as previous and on-going ownership of the land by Indigenous populations. In Australia, the illegal status of settlement was recognised with the legal overturning of *terra nullius*, and in Aotearoa/New Zealand by the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal to rule on the Crown's breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi contracted with Māori iwi. Even in successful cases of renaming acknowledging Indigenous mapping systems, the gatekeepers who have the power to allow the renaming to take place and be officially recognised are still too often non-Indigenous.

The reconnected Aboriginal being who takes back her place in the land reflects what Bart Moore-Gilbert calls a "cosmopolitan conception of a decentred, postnational, but still relational conception of identity [that] can be traced in the linguistic hybridity which does so much to reflect the protagonist's shifting negotiations with various collectives" (29). These shifts in language and relationality bring to light the links between intersubjectivity and place as constructed by

language. Indigenous identities are simultaneously localised at tribal level and globalised on a transnational, pan-Indigenous scale, crossing colonial borders yet respecting local land-based knowledges, singing “a psychic map of their country” (Mudrooroo 114).

3.4 Conclusion

3.4.1 Construction of (Inter)Subjectivity through Discourse

The ending of *the bone people* appears at first glance to present the reader with a successful model of an elective family whose intersubjectivity and relationality are based on language, physical contact, and a shared attachment to the land. Marama Tainui, Joe’s aunt, paints the picture of a harmonious, consensual way of transmitting cultural knowledge in Māori society from elder to child and when the child is ready for it: “when they want to listen, they’ll listen. We can’t wake them up just to tell them our stories. They’re busy making their own” (Hulme, 1986a 442). Transmission can be either forced upon one or available when it is asked for, but it is always necessary. Not only does it perpetuate Māori culture, but also social and family roles because the young need to become ancestors, and this is impossible without having an ancestor in the first place. In this light, the kaumatua making Joe his heir becomes a paternal figure to him. Joe, who grew up fatherless, tells him “I will be a son to you” and is able to become a father to his foster son Simon (Hulme, 1986a 373). The sharing of the name, a convention of the biological family, joins the protagonists together “[a]s umbrella, as shelter, not as a binding,” for in adopting Kerewin’s name Joe and Simon accept to share the language of the family unit (1986a 444).

However, theirs is a family based on Māori rather than Pākehā definitions, and the novel is symptomatic of Indigenous writing in the way it inverts the oppositional dynamics of the dominant discourse. Linda Tuhiwai Smith remarks: “the process of unlearning this language is extremely difficult because the

positioning of Maori as ‘they’ has been the whole point of our colonising experience” (98). For Indigenous authors to reclaim a language that would privilege and recentre their experience, a new identity must be built around a strong Māori subjectivity and community, like Kerewin’s new pronouns. In postmodern fiction particularly, the “speaking subject as the agency of discourse is distinguished from the subject of speech, the ‘I’ of the discourse itself which acts as the anchor for the subjectivity of that spoken subject” (Hutcheon 169). The influence of postmodernism on postcolonial writing is not negligible, yet if the speaking subject in Indigenous literature is distinct from the subject of speech, it is often for different reasons linked with the experience of oppression and historical trauma that disrupts the construction of subjectivity.

Tusitala Marsh offers a possible alternative by arguing that, “in literatures of the postcolonial diaspora, it is the representative ‘I’ amid the ‘poly’ or ‘many’ [...] that lies at the heart of the nation” (2010 208). The collective Indigenous body contains many subjectivities in constant dialogue with one another, and the relational nature of subjectivity is mediated by language, which is responsible for “the possibility of subjectivity because it always contains the linguistic forms appropriate to the expression of subjectivity” (Benveniste 227). It is through language that the speaking subject is constituted and capable of relating to others “within the condition of intersubjectivity, which alone makes linguistic communication possible” (Benveniste 230). Intersubjectivity as a condition for linguistic communication does not foreclose the possibility of non-verbal forms of communication, as argued earlier. Indeed, while it can be used for communication, “language may also be *avoided* in order to convey a message” (Talib 121; original emphasis). In the case of mute characters like Simon in *the bone people*, messages must be conveyed without spoken language.⁷⁹

The use of language by Indigenous writers serves multiple goals, and for Black Australian author Mudrooroo, in the last decades of the 20th century an

⁷⁹ In fact, Simon’s character can be said to offer a representation of colonial voicelessness in his combination of the three silences of the postcolonial stage according to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins’ definition: “inaudibility, muteness, and refusals to speak” (190). His silence complicates relationships with other characters, including schoolmates and relatives, and his own identity-formation.

“‘[a]ctivist literature’ has been replaced by a ‘literature of understanding’ – one that seeks to translate Aboriginal experience into a language that white readers can grasp and appreciate” (1997 16). His view of Aboriginal writing is premised on an understanding of Aboriginality that is narrow and strictly policed by himself, hence his interpretation of a change of tone in writing as a change of politics. One must bear in mind that comprehensibility is a condition for the material dissemination of the text, but also to stage a successful intersubjective encounter between writer and reader, and this confrontation is made even more direct through the mobilisation of elements pertaining to traditional forms of orature. The role of the Indigenous storyteller is therefore to connect with the audience and effect the successful transmission of the stories in their care. Contrary to Mudrooroo, Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith argue that, in contemporary Indigenous writing:

narrators reveal astute political awareness, utilizing a language of human rights when exploring the meanings of their past experience. [They] move from objective to subjective positions under the law, from being victims to agents; from expressing passivity and suffering to exercising critical awareness; from feeling shame to expressing anger, pride, and collective healing; from recounting their individual experiences to understanding themselves as collective subjects, connected not only to other Indigenous communities in Australia, but also to victims of human rights abuse around the world. (113)

What Mudrooroo calls a “literature of understanding” is here posited as a literature of human rights, whose language is consciously crafted by the author in order to influence the reader’s engagement with the issues raised. This is a form of anti-colonial resistance in and of itself that reappropriates English to rewrite identity and relationality, and renegotiate intersubjectivity.

According to child development studies, language holds a central role in the formation of not only the child’s subjectivity but also of cultural awareness and intersubjectivity. The latter two are intricately linked, as psychology scholar Colwyn Trevarthen explains:

[f]rom the start the infant’s impulses to interact with other persons are tending systematically, step-by-step towards construction of cultural awareness. The individual’s cognitive processes are always ready to be moulded by the collective cognition for which they are performed. Thus human intelligence is an innate strategy for picking up the skills of

human social life, and it causes the child to deliberately learn to become a person who has a role in the community. (55)

His definition of intelligence as the capacity to learn to play a part in the community, that is to develop and perform a role with others, illustrates the crucial role of language in the formation of intersubjectivity for the social sciences. Since “what the human brain is looking for is relationships, or engagements,” we are naturally geared towards forming relationships with others, be they constructive or destructive (Trevvarthen, “Relationships”). It is therefore “the relational nature of subjectivity [...] as induced by discourse” that surfaces in literature and is the main object of study of this thesis (Hutcheon 169).

We mainly know others through their words, but words can sweep away the memories of people and overwrite our relationships with them. After Will’s departure:

Norm still pictured him packing and firing his words like bullets, ‘You are wrong, man. You want to take a reality check on the situation, man.’ Norm remembered those words, very insulting, new words around these parts. He frequently had a chance to think about what Will said, so much so he often used his son’s handful of words on others, to be impressive in an argument. This was what memories are made of. Words were like water sweeping by, taking the memories of Will away. (Wright 231-2)

The impact of Will’s words on his father illustrates Dever’s comment on a similar process in *the bone people*, namely “the power of language to join and to heal, and [...] the power of words to wound” (28). Words not only have the power to wound the person who hears them, but also to alter the relationship between the speaker or writer and the interlocutor or reader, and thus language has the power to destroy intersubjectivity in the same way it creates it.

3.4.2 *Inadequacy of Language/Failure of Communication*

We have seen how Hulme’s use of language in *the bone people* can be read as a critique of silence and verbosity as two dangerous extremes of the human

linguistic experience. When language breaks down and fails to strengthen human bonds, violence spreads in the space vacated by it, settles, and rankles. For Hulme violence can be expunged however by re-creating a community and re-opening channels of communication through language. Chris Prentice sums it up thus: “as pain resists symbolisation, the linguistic representation of pain may be enacted in the breakdown of language itself, so that the recovery of language plays a crucial role in the process of survival” (1999 158). The recovery of efficient modes of communication allows for the community to heal its wounds and learn to use language productively again. The return to ancestral land and traditions capable of binding people together in a “commensal” (mutually beneficial or at least non-mutually damaging) community is also evoked in *the bone people* as a potential solution to social ills (Hulme, 1986 383, 434). But one could argue with Janet Wilson that “the optimistic outcome is undermined by the portrayal of an evil which interpenetrates human relationships as a universal, even cosmic condition” (277). Indeed the tension is left unresolved, and although on the final page Joe asserts “[n]o way. Not that way ever again,” the reader remembers him saying of Simon: “I exacerbated his reckless wounding of himself” during his stay at the kaumatua’s, so it seems that there is no awareness of his fault beyond a vague sense of guilt, and no substantial change in his behaviour (Hulme, 1986a 445, 344).

One must bear in mind that language, any language, is but a shared system of arbitrary conventions, and as such it can never serve fully its double purpose of mimesis and communication. Words only make sense when there is someone to utter or write them and someone to listen to or read them, and only if they both have the same reference system. Beside, Simon’s disregard for other people’s possessions can be read as a marker of detachment from materiality and an emphasis on connection with people, beyond words and things. Kerewin and Simon have opposite ways of relating to language and communication: “Kerewin’s wordiness fetishises language [...] This linguistic excess is symptomatic of Kerewin’s withdrawal from human connections, and in this context, Simon’s muteness is rendered a social *ability* rather than a communicational *disability* as it opens up possible new modes of interaction” (Barker 10; original emphasis). Simon’s inability to form and utter words paradoxically enables him to communicate by forcing him to seek alternatives to

speech like hand signals and touch, even though non-verbal forms of language are not failsafe. When Simon has nightmares, “Joe strives, cajoling and pleading in English and Maori and begging interrogatives that are beyond language, to reach the child wherever he is” (Hulme, 1986a 224). Both Māori and English, even with his father’s physical embrace, fail to reach the boy. He is beyond language, as the nightmares isolate him from his intersubjective family and disconnect all channels of communication between him and them.

A successful exchange of words does not guarantee dialogue either, and just as there can be communication without words, words can be exchanged without communication. After discovering Simon’s fresh scars, Kerewin feels “alienated to Joe. [...] A glass wall: she talked, watched his words come to her, made a suitable reply. Nothing communicated” (Hulme, 1986a 114). Although they make up over the revelation of Joe’s abuse of Simon and his promise to ask Kerewin’s approval prior to any further beating, the language itself does not significantly change, and Stephen Fox is right in arguing that “Hulme’s rhetoric is a fractured pastiche of half-thoughts and flash descriptions, which befits the splintered relationships” (413). Language is by definition incomplete and inadequate for direct expression and communication, yet befitting the revelation of the anguish and fragmentariness of broken people and violent relationships. Language’s failure to communicate and carry meaning from speaker to hearer is exemplified when Piri and Lynn visit Simon in the hospital: “[c]hatter chatter chatter and say nothing” (Hulme, 1986a 393). The words implied by “chatter” do not carry any meaning for Simon, thus the spaces left for meaning to inhabit are the silences between, the rifts in language where control on words is not as tight and controlled, also the title of Keri Hulme’s poetry collection *The Silences Between: Moeraki Conversations* (1982). Verbal and non-verbal language participate in affective and cognitive development, and therefore intersubjectivity (Jahoda and Lewis 22).

In linguistics, finally, subjectivity emerges from the spoken “I” of the subject. Benveniste acknowledges that personal pronouns are often omitted in certain countries however, where, he argues:

convention of politeness imposes the use of periphrases or of special forms between certain groups of individuals in order to replace the direct personal references. But these usages only serve to underline the value of the avoided forms; it is the implicit existence of these pronouns that gives social and cultural value to the substitutes imposed by class relationships. (226)

In te reo, there is no personal pronoun strictly equivalent to the “we” of European languages but two subtypes of the first person plural: “inclusive (including the hearer) and exclusive (excluding the hearer)” (Harlow 5). This means that the distinction is an important one in Māori culture, and through a sociolinguistic lens we can detect the sign of a cultural emphasis on social roles rather than individualism. This is further proof that knowledge and use of English influence Indigenous authors to adopt cognitive patterns that are alien to their culture and transform traditional understandings of the subject and her relationships with others. Furthermore, Gaurav Desai asks:

If the English language itself was an instrument in the creation of an elite class, further dividing an indigenous people against itself, would its continued legacy in the postcolonial context not do more harm than good? Would the creation of a national literature written in the ex-colonial language not continue the class divide initiated by the colonizers? (526)

His question remains without an answer because Indigenous writers in settler countries, suffering from the loss of their languages, have no choice over what language they learn in the early years of the formation of intersubjectivity and must recreate language anew to suit their individual, relational, and cultural needs. The final chapter of this thesis explores the role of memory in Indigenous women’s writing, and in particular the ways in which family narratives participate in the construction of the individual self and communal self. The aim is to examine further the role of relatives in relationality and return to the idea of home evoked in Chapter 1, with an emphasis this time on healing and rebuilding what has been destroyed.

Chapter 4.

Memoirs and Memory:

Family, Trauma, and Survival

“And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read.” (Walker 407)

The title of this chapter is more than an easy anaphora: memoirs and memory express how the genre of Indigenous life-writing often differs from Western autobiography to embrace larger historical narratives and family stories. In this chapter I explore how the authors’ engagement with life-writing forms the root of individual survival and cultural survivance through the intergenerational transmission of traumatic memories. The development of Indigenous women’s life writing can be read as a story of empowerment and narrative resistance to monolithic racial and cultural stereotyping. Indigenous women, potentially doubly marginalised because of their gender as well as their racial and cultural identity, have been deprived of a public voice and means of expression for centuries, which makes issues of silence, oblivion, and trauma all the more central to literature, as life-writing allows the author to take control of her own narrative by placing the Indigenous self at the centre and assuming authority over her story. One aspect of this control involves the ability to choose freely to remember or to forget, and to pass on or repress certain memories.

In Australia, Stolen Generations narratives exemplify the fundamental link between Indigenous life-writing and trauma. From the late 19th century to the 1970s, Australia enforced widespread child removal policies aiming at taking mixed-race children away from their Aboriginal mothers (Read 10). Whatever the reasons given by individual states, from the protection of so-called full-blood Aborigines from dying out to the threat mixed-race individuals represented for White Australia’s belief in racist doctrines, for the children placed in missions, never to see their family again, the mothers separated from their children, and the communities deprived of their young, the policies had the same destructive impact. One such narrative is *My Place* (1987), the autobiography of Australian Aboriginal painter Sally Morgan, which includes the life-stories of her great-uncle Arthur Corunna, her mother Gladys Milroy and her father Bill (incorporated in Gladys’s narrative), and her grandmother Daisy Corunna, or Nan. The novel is dominated by Sally’s own life-story from early

childhood memories in the 1950s to the writing of the book in the 1980s. It could be classified as a bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, because of the distinct narrative thread involving the quest for the author's identity, but also as a kunstlerroman, or novel of the growth of an artist, as Sally's Indigenous identity is intimately connected with her art. It also arguably belongs to the memoir and testimonial genres (Kennedy, 1997 235).

Life-writing posits the act of writing the life of the self – but whose self is it? In a postcolonial context it is often a self that escapes the western conventions of searching for truth and objectivity in order to claim and celebrate subjectivity and to explore intersubjectivity. In this chapter I examine four texts belonging to distinct genres representing different ways of narrating the self: autobiography, biography, allegorical novel, and magical realist novel. Sally Morgan's *My Place* tells the story of the discovery of the narrator's maternal Aboriginal origins through the life-stories of her mother and grandmother. Paula Morris's *Rangatira* (2011) is a fictionalised account of the author's ancestor, Māori chief Paratene Te Manu, and his 1863 trip to England to meet Queen Victoria. In Terri Janke's *Butterfly Song* (2005), the narrator Tarena Shaw is a young Law graduate from Thursday Island in Torres Strait who is tasked by her mother with retrieving a family heirloom belonging to her late grandmother to prevent it from being auctioned by a jeweller. Finally, Kelly Ana Morey's *Bloom* (2003) weaves the stories of Constant Spry, her mother Rose, and her grandmother Algebra, whose complex relationship with memory and forgetting is intertwined with Māori history.

The main issues at play in the novels are the dynamics of remembering and forgetting as well as haunting, uncovering secrets, writing trauma, and dealing with the imperative of survival. Through the interactions between memory and memoir I aim to reveal the literary process of decolonisation of the writing/written self in the settler/invasor nations of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. The use of reflexive practices such as fictionalised life-writing expresses a desire on the part of the authors to look into the self to reveal complex dynamics which I aim to bring to light in this chapter, following Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's call to "investigate the heteronomous meanings of the 'colonial subject' and to explore autobiography as a

potential site of decolonization” (xxi-xxii). First I examine the literary genres associated with life-writing, then I explore re-membering as the act of making whole again, and de-membering as a deliberate and necessary un-learning, in order to explore the link between forgetting and survival through the engagement with trauma theory, all the while acknowledging that trauma models are culture-bound and that colonial trauma is experienced on a collective as well as individual level (Craps and Buelens 2008, 4). Finally, the discussion centres on the intersubjective roles of victim and witness in/of trauma narratives to analyse the potential of transmission to undergird and bolster Indigenous survivance.

4.1 Life-Writing

4.1.1 Autobiography

This chapter takes as its starting point Indigenous women’s life-writing, predominantly of the fictional or semi-fictional kind. Life-writing is understood as writing about life, not necessarily one’s own in a direct manner, but writing that gives the reader insight into somebody’s life nonetheless, and the life of their family and their community. The loosening of the definition of auto/biography genres is a salient feature of both postcolonial and feminist critique, as colonial control over ethnic definitions is often accompanied by naming, categorising, and boundary-setting as we saw in Chapter 3. Hence the imperative to erode the generic boundaries of life-writing as a way of enacting the postcolonial impetus towards dissolving conventional national and institutional boundaries. Generic boundaries are the foundations of the colonial system, and undermining them, no matter how slightly, means opening new spaces for literary and cultural freedom, and self-definition (Longley 383). Indeed, postcolonial life-writing is concerned with the use of heterogeneous forms, “from autobiography as conventionally understood, through memoir, to *testimonio*, diary, email and blogging” (Moore-Gilbert xiv). Despite the obvious difference of form between Augustine’s spiritual *Confessions* in 398 AD and Twitter’s 140-character anecdotes of 2015, one could argue that content has only

changed to the extent that technology and society have changed, as writers look for new ways to express themselves. Despite the long literary history of life-writing, we must also bear in mind that “the term *autobiography* is a post-Enlightenment coinage” (Smith and Watson xvii; original emphasis). It is a post-Enlightenment and specifically western term derived from a certain understanding of truth, objectivity, and universality often forestalling for western critics the acceptance of conflicting worldviews and genuine difference.

Generally understood (based on the etymology of the word) as writing about the life of the self (who writes), autobiography in the west has taken on voyeuristic associations since Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1782 *Confessions* and become associated with a foray into the author’s mind and life experiences. However, as Smith and Watson note in their study of western literary critics’ response to, and reception of, postcolonial women’s autobiographies, “[w]here Western eyes see Man as a unique individual rather than a member of a collectivity, of race or nation, of sex or sexual preference, Western eyes see the colonized as an amorphous, generalized collectivity” (xvii). The prejudice they outline may be due to, or cause for, a stronger emphasis on individualism in contemporary western societies that has shaped both western and non-western writing.⁸⁰ The categorisation of life-writing itself is an on-going focus of debate, with some critics such as Smith and Watson asserting that “what has been designed as western autobiography is only one form of ‘life writing,’” while others like Gillian Whitlock contend that, although “to label these in terms of variants of production and consumption – such as ‘life writing,’ ‘life history writing,’ ‘slave narrative,’ ‘testimony’ – is useful to the extent that it introduces cultural and historical specificity [...] It is risky to the extent that it reinforces the xenophobia in the uses of the term ‘autobiography’” (xviii; 160-1). Autobiography is sometimes seen as a hobby for the privileged undertaken as a form of introspection, whereas “ethnic” life-writing is more commonly approached as testimony. In short, autobiography conventionally centres on the writing subject, while life-writing is seen as valuable for the story it tells, that is for the written object.

⁸⁰ Fredric Jameson for example has been criticised for such generalisation in his article “Third-World Literature.”

Differences between women and men's life-writing have also been acknowledged, by Bart Moore-Gilbert among others, who contends that women's life-writing is articulated around the following concerns: "first, thematics of subjectivities; second, issues of form; and third, questions surrounding the social function/cultural politics of life-writing" (xvii). He identifies these concerns about subject position, form, and impact as differing from men's life-writing, itself characterised according to Anne Brewster by "a notion of the solitary and privileged individual" (126). Feminist critics, on the other hand, are concerned that such essentialising arguments about the putatively distinctive nature of female subjectivity might reinforce stereotypes, and they have therefore "attributed to women's life-writing a programmatic desire to subvert not so much its 'internal' rules of organisation but the 'external' borders which separate it from other genres" (Moore-Gilbert 70). The focus on breaking down the categories of genre is linked to a female subjectivity constructed by intersubjective relationships. Indeed, for Brewster, "women's autobiographies invoke not so much personal and individual histories as collective and cultural histories" (126). These collective histories are inscribed in a particular time and locale, yet their relevance transcends borders and speaks to readers across the world. Increased interest in published Indigenous women's life-writing bears witness to this readerly desire to look for universality in the voices of women.

Indigenous women's life-writing constitutes a relatively new corpus within auto/biography studies, and part of its remit is to re-establish the "truth" of Indigenous women, previously "known" as literary objects mostly in white-authored texts. When an Indigenous woman is acknowledged as the author of a text, critics have voiced concerns that white-controlled modes of edition, publication, and dissemination will necessarily produce a "whitewashed" text designed for non-Indigenous consumption (Huggan, 2001 vii). However, Aboriginal scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson disagrees with this view and asserts that, "although white editing or scribing may influence the writing of the text, it does not erase the subtext, which is informed by the knowledge and experience of Indigenous women" (2). In her opinion, even a text written by an Aboriginal woman and modified by a white editor must be regarded as Aboriginal literature, for it carries at its heart the possibility of

subversion of white control over publishing and marketing. This is the view I subscribe to in my selection of primary texts for this chapter.

The concern with subjectivity in Aboriginal and Māori women's writing is heightened by their experience of often having been long denied the expression of said subjectivity. Indeed, policies of displacement and dispossession refused them agency, while pervasive racism and sexism participated in their dehumanisation. According to Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, in Indigenous life stories written before the 1997 *Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Family*, also known as the *Inquiry* or *Bringing Them Home: The "Stolen Children" Report*, "narrators witnessed to their own *shaming and abjection* within white culture; they told of lives compromised by a *lack of recognition and validation*" (109; my emphasis). Although in many ways Australian society still has a long way to go before unearthing and weeding the deep roots of racism, one cannot underestimate the impact of the revelations of the *Inquiry* on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Similarly to testimonies from concentration camps after World War II, the *Inquiry* made "real" what had previously been ignored, and revealed a country's darkest acts of cruelty to its own people. For Indigenous people, it was a confirmation of what was already known, the acknowledgement of unjust oppression at the hands of the government that was fuelled by the passivity, and in some cases active complicity, of mainstream Australia. Given the scale of the Stolen Generations across the continent, such testimonies have the potential to reveal the impact of the policy on both individuals and communities.

By subverting the codes of autobiography, authors such as Morgan, Janke, Morey, and Morris do write the self, be she the writer herself, her direct ancestor, an allegory for her people, or a fictional character who reveals much about the author's aspirations for her people. Moore-Gilbert suggests that fictional "postcolonial life-writing also deploys the genre [of autobiography] to challenge the epistemological status of authorial/autobiographical identity [...] and thereby to contest the wider truth claims conventionally made by, and on behalf of, canonical autobiography" (xxii). This is a main feature of the genres of memoir and testimony to be explored

later in this chapter, and confirms my initial interpretation of fictional auto/biography as a form of life-writing in its own right. As Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney note in the Latin American context, “the ‘protagonist’ who gives testimony [of human rights abuse] is a speaker who does not conceive of him/herself as extraordinary but instead as an allegory of the many, the people. This collective identity is particularly revealed in [...] female-gendered testimonials” (8). Indigenous women’s testimonies are commonly collective both in scope and in resonance.

The self in Indigenous women’s writing therefore tends to be relational. Two recurrent features of Indigenous women’s life-writing according to Kateryna Longley are “the sense of communal life that is evoked through the individual story” and “the intimate relationship with tribal land” (372). The relationship with the land is an important feature of Indigenous life linked with place and displacement, but here our main focus is the “sense of communal life that is evoked through the individual story,” as well as the relationship between the individual and the community as it is revealed in the text. In *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, Moreton-Robinson devotes an entire chapter to Aboriginal women’s life-writing with a strong emphasis on relationality from the preface onwards (xviii). According to her, “Indigenous women’s life writings are based on the collective memories of inter-generational relationships between predominantly Indigenous women, extended families and communities” (Moreton-Robinson 1). Memory’s role in fictional life-writing cannot be overestimated, as theories of intertextuality and the impossibility of originality have shown the extent to which fiction relies on lived experience, either directly and through storytelling for Morgan, or archival research and imagination for Morris.

Regarding form, I agree with Moreton-Robinson that the term “‘life writings’ has been used because the Indigenous women’s texts that have been analysed do not fit the usual strict chronological narrative of autobiography, and they are the product of collaborative lives” (1). The frequent relational aspect and the use of anachrony participate in setting Indigenous women’s writing apart from traditional western autobiography, yet the prominence of memory and family relationships confirms the

texts' status as life-writing.⁸¹ Moreton-Robinson adds that "(k)in, extended family and community are important to Indigenous women because they are where social memory becomes activated through shared experiences, knowledges and remembering" (15). Memory is mediated by community, and since "Indigenous women's subjectivity is shaped and reshaped by the subjects themselves through their experiences," intersubjectivity becomes the central focus of life-writing (Moreton-Robinson 15). This is also Moore-Gilbert's position, as he notes that "the emphasis on relationality of personhood in women's life-writing necessarily erodes the boundaries between autobiography and biography" (xxii). It is evident that the relational aspect of Indigenous women's life-writing constitutes one of the biggest challenges to the orthodoxies of most traditional western autobiography.

Furthermore, Moore-Gilbert adds, "the formation of selfhood in a culture with an enlarged and more plastic conception of (extended) family is, in principle, likely to differ in terms of its patterns of individuation and psychic development to what characterises the western bourgeois nuclear (or single-parent) family" (xix). This translates into an emphasis on community in the sense of a supportive family that does not require blood ties to emerge and sustain itself, as we have seen in Chapter 3. The fact that Indigenous women's life-writing is imbricated in the community also foregrounds the presence of socio-political issues of importance to that community in the texts. This is likely to be one of the reasons why these narratives transcend canonical conventions, along with institutional sexism and racism. As Moore-Gilbert observes, the "predominant systems of aesthetic criticism generally divorced literature 'proper' from politics, which was deemed to threaten the instrumentalisation of a supposedly autonomous and sacrosanct aesthetic sphere" (111). Literature's reputation as a pastime of the privileged class has ensured for a long time that the concerns of the oppressed and the dispossessed were excluded and deemed unworthy of artistic scrutiny. This distinction between high art and protest writing is visible for instance in the reviews following the publication of Australian Aboriginal poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal's first collection *We Are Going*

⁸¹ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan also discusses "the mainstream of temporal experience: time as an intersubjective, public, social convention which we establish in order to facilitate our living together" (44). Morgan's novel re-establishes a family-centred temporal experience where analepsis is an integral part of the internal narrative conventions.

(1964) criticising the author's political engagement.⁸² The distinction has endured to this day with postcolonial life-writing commonly labelled "protest writing" as opposed to literature (Moore-Gilbert 128).

In life-writing, the authority derived from non-fiction is combined with the writer's mastery of the coloniser's language and the self-effacement of the author as artist, as she discards the autobiographical contract and intrudes into the narrative to take an active role as a character in her own play. According to proponent of the contract Philippe Lejeune, "[t]he autobiographical contract is the affirmation in the text of this identity" between author, narrator, and protagonist (202). While reassuring for the reader, this similarity is a constricting convention for the author. Historically as well as geographically and culturally variable, the contractual product known as autobiography is too limiting for the characterisation of Indigenous women's life-writing.

4.1.2 *Memoirs and Testimony*

A crucial feature of Indigenous women's life-writing is the challenge to what constitutes historical discourse through "the strategic erosion of established distinctions between the public/political and private/personal spheres, [...] the critique of the supposed 'objectivity' of History, [and] the traditional primacy of archival material [over] sources such as 'oral testimonies'" (Moore-Gilbert 78). The use of oral sources and frequent doubts over the veracity of facts in *My Place* fall within this critique of history as written by white people, a history that often silences Indigenous people's voices and their past. Most Indigenous women's life-writing thus enact what Mary-Louise Pratt calls autoethnography, a counter-discursive practice involving the appropriation of ethnographic idioms for Indigenous self-

⁸² As Karen Fox observes, "Oodgeroo's poetry was subject to considerable criticism as being mere propaganda rather than literature. [...] The criticisms were framed in terms of literary merit. Yet such criticisms carried the potential to suppress Oodgeroo's political message, by arguing that politics did not belong in literature, and by denying Oodgeroo literary acceptance while she used her poetry to carry her message" (61-2).

representation to replace western ethnological texts as the basis for cultural knowledge. Morgan's autobiographical narrative is interspersed with transcripts of oral testimonies delivered by her great-uncle, mother, and grandmother. According to Pratt's definition, the term autoethnographic expression is used when:

colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those constructed by the other in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. (7; original emphasis)

In Morgan's novel, Sally researches Aboriginal history at the Battye Library in Perth, Western Australia, but instead of using her findings directly in the narrative, for example by quoting historians, she uses her readings of white ethnographers to convince her family members to speak out and offer a counterpoint to the dominant discourse. Thus she tells Arthur:

there's almost nothing written from a personal point of view about Aboriginal people. All our history is about the white man. No one knows what it was like for us. A lot of our history has been lost, people have been too frightened to say anything. [...] I just want to try to tell a little bit of the other side of the story. (Morgan 163-164)

There is a strong political desire on Sally's part to rectify history and reverse the othering process by putting her family's stories at the centre. For Lizzy Finn, autoethnography is also "a recuperative act of piecing together a collective memory across generations," and this is exemplified by the transcripts of taped interviews that interrupt Sally's autobiographical narrative to weave together all its textual strands towards the creation of a collective familial narrative (20).

The proposition to read Indigenous women's fictional life-writing as memoirs can be illuminated by Maxine Hong Kingston's definition of the genre. In her essay "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers," she lauds reviewers of *The Woman Warrior* who note that Hong is "slyly writing a memoir, [...] a series of stories or anecdotes to illuminate the times rather than be autobiographical" (64). Memoir as a narrative strategy allows the writer to perform autoethnography conflating the personal and the political, the individual and the communal. Daisy and Gladys's

voices in *My Place* are mediated by their daughter and granddaughter Sally, who filters their speech through her writing. The activation and articulation of memories function as a challenge to colonial discursive boundaries and allow for the coexistence of past and present as contained in the time of writing. Gladys's narrative, embedded within Sally's story, paradoxically opens with the statement "I have no memory of being taken from my mother" (Morgan 241). Yet she recounts her time as a toddler at Parkerville Children's Home, summoning memories she is unlikely to possess since according to modern psychoanalysis adults cannot retain memories of very early childhood. Memory in Indigenous writing does not cover the same "reality" as memory defined by western social sciences, and Gladys's toddler memories are simultaneously "true" recollections and fabrications on the model of the actual childhood of many Indigenous girls placed in such homes. Memoir is an ideal medium for such narratives as it combines the historical authority of testimony with the freedom of individual recollection.

Morris opens her 2011 novel *Rangatira* with a "Historical note" stating: "Paratene's life spanned the nineteenth century [...] he was invited to travel to England – in 1863 – and was taken to meet the reigning monarch. This is his story" (xi). By positioning her text as Paratene's story, she ensures that the narrative assumes the authority of a biography, all the while retaining the freedom of fictionalised discourse. Indeed, Morris is conscious of her standpoint as a novelist working from archival research and filling the gaps with context-informed fiction. In order to retain her freedom she admits to working alone, as opposed to involving her Māori community in the telling of the story. She states that asking permission to publish Indigenous life-writing would be to risk the possibility of people giving their veto and blocking the publication of the text.⁸³ The fact that *Rangatira* is based on the life of Morris's direct ancestor places it firmly in the category of Indigenous life-writing, and since it is written in the first person it creates the illusion that we are reading Paratene Te Manu's own memoir. The *OED* defines memoirs as "[r]ecords of events or history written from the personal knowledge or experience of the writer,

⁸³ Morris made this comment during a public reading and discussion chaired by Dr. Michelle Keown at the University of Stirling (04 Dec. 2012).

or based on special sources of information,” further highlighting the link between self and history, subjectivity and historical context, prominent in *Rangatira*.⁸⁴

Lee Quinby’s study of memoir, on the other hand, frames it as a challenge to dominant constructions of the self. She asserts that “memoirs (particularly in their collective form) construct a subjectivity that is multiple and continuous. [...] In relation to autobiography, then, memoirs function as counter-memory” (299). The notion of life-writing forms as allowing for counter-memories, or memories that run counter to the dominant discourse, provides a useful link between literary genre and subjective acts such as remembering. She continues: “[w]hereas autobiography promotes an ‘I’ that shares with confessional discourse an assumed interiority and an ethical mandate to examine that interiority, memoirs promote an ‘I’ that is explicitly constituted in the reports of the utterances and proceedings of others” (Quinby 299). In *Rangatira*, Paratene’s voice is mediated by that of his descendant Morris, who is responsible for the image she produces of him in her novel. The (in)accuracy of portraiture is an important issue in the novel, since the painted portrait of Paratene by European artist Gottfried Lindauer that graces the cover of the book is described at length in the novel as Paratene dwells on the process of sitting for the painter and their developing friendship. Paratene remarks on the finished painting that his “moko looks very bright and very green [...]. It’s not quite right, the way the Bohemian has painted it” (Morris 252). The inexact portrayal of the moko by the painter raises the issue of the potentially incorrect portrayal of the man himself by the author in the novel, and by extension questions the faithfulness of artistic representation in general, including photography and biography.⁸⁵

Quinby also refers to the spectral presences, such as ghosts, which inhabit texts, drawing on Virginia Woolf’s *Moments of Being* to suggest that “memoirs confront what other forms of life writing too often ignore – the pervasive ‘invisible presences’ that are the most profound determinants of subjectivity” (301). In *Bloom*, Morey writes the ghost Nanny Smack as a main character in the novel and a presence

⁸⁴ <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116334?redirectedFrom=memoir#eid> (accessed 6 Dec. 2013).

⁸⁵ For a more in-depth study of visual and textual portraiture in *Rangatira* see Seran, Justine. “Photography’s Long Shadow: Ekphrasis and Maori Literature.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 51.4 (2015): 436-448.

that is more or less solid, possesses a witty personality, and has time-travelling abilities. Nanny Smack is a “Hau Hau witch” from the mid-19th century who travels freely between the past, the present, and, one can infer, the future (Morey 134). She is steeped in the historical period of the Taranaki Land Wars, and through her pendulum movement between the present of Connie’s lifetime and the past she illustrates her own remark to Connie that “[y]our books tell you that the Land Wars finished in 1870 or 1909 or whatever trendy new date the current crop of revisionists are putting their life savings on. But you know they’re wrong. Same war, still going, but a different way of fighting now” (14). The continued relevance of the history of settler-Indigenous relations is like the ghost who keeps visiting and giving at times unsolicited advice.

Moreover, if memoir is “neither fiction nor non-fiction,” it is a highly flexible genre allowing for the blurring of the line between actuality and imagination (Minh-ha 135). This may seem in contradiction with the avowed project of recording and establishing the “truth” of Indigenous women’s lives through self-representation, yet the mixture of authority and freedom available in memoirs arguably elevates fictional autobiography to the level of historiographic metafiction. This term coined by Linda Hutcheon designates the way postmodern, and especially postcolonial, authors re-centre their own histories while problematising and calling the reader’s attention to the artificiality of the dominant historical discourse (105). This tension between personal history and official discourse is reminiscent of the related genre of *testimonio*. George Yuidice in a 1985 unpublished manuscript quoted by Gugelberger and Kearney defines testimonial literature as

an *authentic* narrative, told by a *witness* who is *moved* to *narrate* by the *urgency* of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing *popular oral discourse*, the witness portrays his or her own *experience* as *representative* of a *collective memory* and *identity*. *Truth* is summoned in the cause of *denouncing* a present situation of exploitation and oppression or *exorcising* and *setting aright* official history. (4; original emphasis).

As we have seen in this section on literary genres, Indigenous women’s (semi-fictional) life-writing transcends generic boundaries to create a form of choral testimonial autoethnography concerned with memory and (in)justice.

4.2 Memory

4.2.1 Remembering

The intersubjective act of remembering, or bringing memories to the surface of consciousness, and sharing them with the reader places memory at the core of relationality. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the individual is positioned in relation to herself, her family or immediate circle, and the wider community in which she lives. Paul Ricoeur reaches a similar conclusion in regards to memory:

Does there not exist an intermediate level of reference between the poles of individual memory and collective memory, where concrete exchanges operate between the living memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which they belong? This is the level of close relations, to whom we have a right to attribute a memory of a distinct kind. These close relations, these people who count for us and for whom we count, are situated along a range of varying distances in the relation between self and others. (131)

The individual and her relations continually renegotiate these distances in an unstable and ever-shifting movement mediated by family. Ricoeur adds that it is “not with the single hypothesis of the polarity between individual memory and collective memory that we enter into the field of history, but with the hypothesis of the threefold attribution of memory: to oneself, to one’s close relations, and to others” (132). History is present in the novels in the form of lived history and its focus is on the actual impact of the past on Indigenous people in the present, rather than a putative dichotomy between memory and history. In *Butterfly Song*, Janke layers several significant time periods for Australian Aboriginals and weaves them together. In the early 1990s, Law graduate Tarena is tasked by her mother Lily with retrieving a pearl butterfly brooch that belonged to Lily’s late mother Francesca; in the late 1980s we follow Tarena’s frustration with the white Australian academe; in the 1970s we see her as a child with her parents and at school; and in the 1940s we witness her grandmother meeting her grandfather and founding a family.

The fact that the novel was published in 2005 but refers mostly to the period before the 1988 Bicentennial, when few Australians knew the extent of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dispossession, raises concerns regarding the visibility of Indigenous issues and institutional/social forgetting. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Bicentennial marked a turning point in the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations: as white Australia celebrated the 200th anniversary the First Fleet disembarking on the east coast, many Indigenous people and allies staged counter-celebrations mourning the loss of Aboriginal land, freedom, and sovereignty and renamed Australia Day as Survival Day. Survival Day celebrations feature in *Butterfly Song* in the form of the concert that Tarena attends and where her sister Clarissa sings (Janke 86). Schaffer and Smith call such celebrations a “counter-remembrance of settlement-as-invasion” challenging mainstream Australia’s “patriotic tribute to the unified fictions that sustained their belonging as citizens of Australia” (86). The novel itself can be read as an allegory for Native Title struggles, as Tarena argues in front of the court about the pearl butterfly: “[i]t was in my grandmother’s possession until her death. That’s twelve years of prior possession by my family, and the song, the story of the brooch, has *never* left my family’s possession” (272-3; original emphasis). The concept of continued possession in spiritual terms is central to Native Title claims since the landmark Mabo vs. Queensland case saw Torres Strait Islanders’ land rights recognised and the *terra nullius* doctrine overturned, thus giving hope to Indigenous nations that some of the wrongs of colonisation may finally be put right.⁸⁶

In order to be successful, Native Title claims, like Tarena’s legal case to recuperate the pearl-shell butterfly, need to put forward the kind of evidence that would hold in front of an Australian court, itself modelled on the British legal system. The memory of ancestral possession can be linked further back in time to Plato’s concept of anamnesis, which posits cultural knowledge as a pre-given to be retrieved, thus akin to the idea of a collective unconscious. For John Ackrill, anamnesis is about “our acquisition of concepts rather than of necessary truths”

⁸⁶ See Kevin Gilbert’s pessimism on the issue: “the Aboriginal land rights issue is an exercise in relativities – inevitable when the thief is also the judge” (1978, 269). The success rate of land rights claims is still low post-Mabo.

while Michel Beaujour adds that it is “a type of memory both very archaic and very modern by which the events of an individual life are eclipsed by the recollection of an entire culture, thus creating a paradoxical form of self-effacement” (13; qtd/trans. Lionnet 225). This form of anamnesis in the novel can be seen as foregrounding the recollection of traditional culture by Indigenous people, meaning the retrieval of knowledge they always possessed and the acknowledgement of this continued memory. After Francesca’s death, her young children forget about the pearl-shell butterfly she took with her to the hospital and that disappeared after her death, yet as a middle-aged woman, Lily sees the photograph of the brooch about to be auctioned and recognises it immediately, without any doubt, as if the memory of it had always been lurking just below the surface of her conscious remembering, but firmly anchored in a deeper form of cultural memory associated with her mother.

The role of memory in postmodern texts can be manifested in less obvious ways. As Hutcheon puts it, postmodern art often “confronts the amnesia of colonialism through the memory of post-colonialism” (170). Postmodern themes and literary tools such as multiple and unreliable narrators, time shifts, and elements of the Absurd are present in *Bloom*, for instance in a very short scene where Connie removes a glass splinter from Hebe’s face and asks her who Rose is, to which Hebe replies that it is not a secret, and Connie wonders: “Remembering, then, that’s all I have to do?” (Morey 102-3).⁸⁷ This list of seemingly unrelated actions reflects a breakdown of communication hinting at the apparently failed relationships between the women of the Spry family, who accept the irreconcilable distance between them as characteristic of human relationships in general, and establish an unconventional system of interdependent coexistence. If remembering is all that Connie has to do, then she is assigned the role of the cortex dedicated to memory and creativity in the familial brain, while Rose embodies the parts devoted to forgetting and nurturing, Mrs Spry the areas of pain and hunger, and Hebe the zones of desire and freedom. Communication, or neurons, might misfire, but the Spry brain remains alive and whole, and capable to selectively remember or forget.

⁸⁷ The Absurd as both a philosophical concept and a literary genre posits that there are no meaningful links in the world but that humans will always try to find some. The doomed enterprise is that of the reader trying to “make sense” of this scene.

The subversive power of memory is such that colonial institutions have spent time, resources, and many lives to make Indigenous people “forget” who they are through massacre, dispossession, and child removal. Attempts at demanding public recognition and reparations for the traumatic past have been hampered by the disbelief that individual stories such as Daisy’s in *My Place* are “truly” representative of wider social policy, as well as tendencies to prioritise contexts of war and catastrophe in Africa or Asia to establish a hierarchy of suffering. Here I would like to mention Michael Rothberg’s introduction of “the model of multidirectional memory, a model based on recognition of the productive interplay of disparate acts of remembrance and developed in contrast to an understanding of memory as involved in a competition over scarce public resources” (309). Multidirectional memory opens the possibility of thinking about oppression and genocide in new ways that reject the zero-sum game of public memorialisation and are inclusive of diverse forms of trauma.

When Elleke Boehmer asserts that “[r]eminiscing is at once the redemption and the effective alienation of the past,” she alludes to the double bind of colonial memory which we saw in Chapter 2: remembering is a way of reclaiming ownership of the past but when this past is too painful it can cause untold suffering, and forgetting thus becomes an act of self-preservation to reassert survival (1993 274).⁸⁸ Counter to this imposed forgetting, “[p]ostcolonial fiction has often sought to replace the public and collective narrative of history with an interior and private act of memory,” but a memory that is collective and transhistorical insofar as it also encompasses that of the ancestors (Whitehead 82). Anne Whitehead’s substitution of the public with a private narrative would be more productive if framed in terms of a fusion of history and memory, which are often indistinguishable in Indigenous cultures. In addition to its collective scope and transhistorical temporality, this form of memory is always in movement, especially in 21st century settler colonial nations where Indigenous memory is under pressure to prove itself and under threat of erasure.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 2 on amnesia of painful past as strategy rather than mental condition.

4.2.2 Forgetting

In *Use and Abuse of History*, Friedrich Nietzsche remarks that “[e]ven a happy life is possible without remembrance, as the beast shows; but life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetfulness” (qtd. Casey 2). Indeed, the inability to forget is classified as a serious clinical disease and its consequences on the daily life of the individual affected by hyper memory have been studied in detail by psychiatrists (Luria 66-72). Casey notes that “Nietzsche stressed the virtues of ‘active forgetfulness,’ that is, the capacity to forget not merely by *lapsus* but wilfully and for a purpose – so as to erase, or at least to cover over, the scars which repeated remembering would only turn back into open wounds” (7). In *Bloom*, involuntary memories are indeed associated with suffering and contrasted with what Morey calls “falling into the safety of forgetting” (243). Mrs Spry, Rose, and Connie exemplify Nietzsche’s association of forgetfulness with survival: whether they attempt to gain control over their own memories or revel in the possibility of oblivion, it is their wilful desire to do so that matters (48-9). In short, both remembering and forgetting can be associated with survival as long as the individual remains in control of their memories.

However, it is not as straightforward as asserting that the retrieval of memory allows people to re-inscribe themselves into history. Taking control over one’s memories involves using one’s power and freedom, two notions rarely associated with the position of Indigenous women in contemporary settler societies. Yet there is an awareness in the novels that “[f]ailure to remember involves unfreedom in the precise form of being ‘condemned to repeat’ a given circumstance rather than understanding it or creatively varying it” (Casey 305). In *Bloom*, the necessities of forgetting and remembering fluctuate with the characters’ evolution. When Rose lives with the father of her children Elias in a commune, for instance, she refuses to smoke marijuana because she wants to remember while everyone else tries to forget, a behaviour which seems at odds with what we know of the character’s fondness for forgetting in the present of the narrative (Morey 228). I argue that it is her refusal to comply with the community’s will that matters more than her desire to avoid THC-

induced oblivion; it is a way of reasserting her individuality and of opposing Elias by attempting to control the only thing she still can – her mind – since her body was taken to the commune under his coercion. It is only after Elias's death and a period of temporary amnesia that Rose can bask in glorious forgetfulness again.

Forgetting does not necessarily translate into ridding oneself of memories either. Whitlock's introduction to *The Intimate Empire*, a study of women's autobiographies from the 1830s to 2000, focuses on the following themes: "[n]ostalgia for imperial dominance, the *strategic forgetting* that this requires, and ways of relating to the ruins of colonialism in 'late imperial culture'" (2; my emphasis). Forgetting colonial history is a very topical issue in European and North American nations, which retain overseas territories to this day. This applies to former colonies, whether they gained independence over 200 years ago like Haiti or a mere 40 years ago like Mozambique; but also to settler countries that have not yet faced up to the consequences of the expropriation of Indigenous lands and display extreme reactions to incoming immigration from former colonies. Like the serpent swallowing its tail, or the trauma patient re-enacting the traumatic event, European colonisation has left deep marks on global consciousness that will not go away until its legacy is addressed. Relegating colonialism to history books and giving decolonisation a firm end date, that is forgetting its continuing presence, transpires in white peoples' exhortations for Indigenous people and natives of former colonies to "get over it."⁸⁹ Meanwhile, assertions that we live in the postcolonial era because colonisation is a thing of the past ("post") ignores the fact that the postcolonial can be read as the contemporary era itself, in other words everything that comes after the start of colonisation.

Morgan's *My Place* is representative of postcolonial women's testimonies for it displays "the exploration of personal and collective experience and their relationship; and the cultural processes of remembering and forgetting" (Reynolds 79). As an autobiographical narrative, it presents a view of the world mediated by the subjectivity of the writer/narrator for whom, as Robert Reynolds writes, "[t]here is

⁸⁹ Columnists like Andrew Bolt in Australia and writers such as C.K. Stead in New Zealand for example are renowned for such conservative views.

no closure” (83). There cannot be closure for the Indigenous life-writer so long as settler colonialism will not call itself by its real name and make amends for its own history of violent invasion and dispossession.⁹⁰ The deep wound inflicted by colonialism upon the land and first peoples of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is still raw, for it has been passed down from grandparents to grandchildren, the intergenerational aspect making closure impossible and transmission compulsory. Just as historical trauma cannot be forgotten and must be passed down, so is the resilience of those who have survived tragedy. This resilience is present in *My Place*, for although Sally retrieves most of the stories of her mother and grandmother, this knowledge does not weigh her down. Her refusal to forget and her acceptance of the impossibility of forgetting actually allow Sally to feel comfortable with her identity by knowing where she comes from and what her family went through.

Other instances of forgetting include the narrator accusing his people of forgetting their own culture. In *Rangatira*, Tere Pakia, Hapimana and Takarei, members of the Māori group travelling to England with Paratene, are shocked to see naked statues in a British museum, and their reaction immediately prompts Paratene to reflect: “[t]hese Maori had short memories [...] but then I wondered if they were simply too young to remember our own ways, before the missionaries made us cover ourselves with cloth” (77). Paratene’s cultural reminiscence about natural, precolonial nakedness is matched by the younger generation’s forgetting of ancestral values and customs, which were replaced by Christian values soon perceived as universal. The denial of actual memory is by far the most common occurrence of fabricated oblivion however. An example of this is Gladys and Sally’s dialogue about Daisy: “‘You know she won’t talk about the past. She says she can’t remember.’ ‘Do you think she does remember?’ ‘I think so, but she thinks we’re prying, trying to hurt her’” (138). Daisy’s denial of memory is an attempt to protect herself from painful recollection. In this way it is similar to Lily lying to her daughter Tarena in *Butterfly Song* about the day her father (Francesca’s husband Kit) died: “‘You told me you didn’t remember. Why?’ I pressure. ‘I guess I always blamed

⁹⁰ See the controversy about Aldi selling t-shirts reading “Australia est. 1788” on Australia Day 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/08/aldi-takes-tshirts-off-shelves> (accessed 28 Aug. 2015).

myself” (102). A child’s guilt at breaking eggs and therefore bringing bad luck to her family (and being responsible for the accidental death of her father) determines the denial of memory of a middle-aged woman who still suffers the consequences of this tragedy several decades on. Therefore, the painful element of the past that has a significant impact on the present is traumatic for its consequences disrupt the characters’ psyche and the narratives themselves. As Cathy Caruth puts it: “[t]he historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (1995 8). This is what makes childhood trauma (for example) so powerfully destructive, as the sheer temporal distance from the traumatic event makes it nearly impossible for the person suffering from it to retrieve and work through it.

4.3 *Writing Trauma*

4.3.1 *Victims*

At this stage it is important to examine the motivations for, and effect of, “transforming traumatic memories into narrative memories” by writing life-stories of trauma (Andermahr and Pellicer-Ortin 2). In contrast to physical medicine where it designates the wound itself, trauma in psychological terms is commonly understood as the repetitive manifestation of an extreme event not fully digested by consciousness. However, Schaffer and Smith rightly point out that this model leaves “little room for the expression of a critical consciousness on the part of tellers of their knowledge of the politics of oppression” (112). Designated primarily as psychological rather than political, the pathological definition of trauma must be revised in order to account for its potentially inherited historical nature, and indeed to account for non-western conceptualizations of the psyche, mental health, and ways of healing. In *My Place*, Daisy’s trauma of being removed from her mother as a child as part of the Stolen Generations is compounded with that of losing her elder daughter, Gladys’s sister, to the same tragedy. The repetition of history is also hinted

at by allusions to incest, which the reader pieces together from Daisy's confirmation that her father is Howden Drake-Brockman, the white station-owner who employs her as a housemaid, along with her refusal to say who Gladys's father is (since she asserts that everyone knew and nobody talked) as well as Gladys's realisation from an old photograph that she and Howden look uncannily alike.

According to scholar of Indigenous North American literature Nancy Van Styvendale, periodic child removals over several 'generations "can be seen as material incarnations of a repetitive trauma that takes place trans/historically or in multiple historical times" (216). Along with incest, which Diana Russell calls the "secret trauma" in the title of her 1986 book, child removal is a major cause of trauma that straddles both the domestic and political spheres, and its role in the Indigenous-authored texts under scrutiny in this chapter can be understood using Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's notion of the transgenerational phantom as "an undisclosed family secret handed down to an unwitting descendant" (16). Nicholas Rand adds that the definition:

enables us to understand how the falsification, ignorance, or disregard of the past – whether institutionalized by a totalitarian state [...] or practiced by parents and grandparents – is the breeding ground of the phantomatic return of shameful secrets on the level of individuals, families, the community, and possibly even entire nations. (169)

Australia's official national narrative and Aboriginal individuals have kept the same secrets with different motivations: the former to conceal its own racist history and the latter for personal reasons. Thus in *My Place* Gladys begs Sally: "'Can't you just leave the past buried, it won't hurt anyone then?' 'Mum,' I reasoned, 'it's already hurt people. It's hurt you and me and Nan, all of us [...]. I have the right to know my own history'" (Morgan 152). Like Doris in Chapter 2, Sally raises the issue of the ownership of the past, and her reaction reveals that the transgenerational phantom is also an absence that results in the pain of the descendant, who is hurt precisely by this lack of knowledge of the past that has been replaced with silence and mythologised narrative.

Psychological studies on intergenerational trauma reveal the mechanics of transmission of abusive behaviour and provide potentially productive theoretical

tools to study how the effects of trauma can be “transmitted across generations, affecting the children and grandchildren of those that were initially victimized” (Bombay, Matheson and Anisman 6). Hence Sally’s feeling of incompleteness and her quest to uncover her mother and grandmother’s stories and digest them in order to know who she is. In *My Place*, the transgenerational aspects of the narrative via the matrilineal strand anchor the women of Sally’s family into Australian history. To Caruth’s fundamental question “What do the dying bodies of the past [...] have to do with the living bodies of the present?” Morgan responds that they still feed the lives they begat and that their presence must be acknowledged through that of their descendants (1996 26).⁹¹ As Stef Craps reminds us, however, when using trauma theory to examine Indigenous literature we must bear in mind that foundational texts such as Caruth’s “show little interest in the traumatic experiences of members of non-Western cultural traditions” (2013 26). Despite calls from critics such as Craps, trauma studies scholars still focus largely on western texts, while postcolonial scholars tend to examine political (as opposed to psychological) issues in non-western texts. This is not to say that one should apply western trauma theory uncritically to postcolonial fiction without a thorough adaptation of its frameworks to alternative concepts of the psyche that put emphasis on collective forms of selfhood, for it would amount to a dangerous form of medical imperialism (Summerfield 1).⁹²

One should also bear in mind Bruce Lawrence and Aisha Karim’s distinction between the experience of destructive violence as product or as process mentioned in Chapter 1. As a product it is isolated or episodic, but as a process, “violence is cumulative and boundless [and] it becomes part of the expectation of the living” (Lawrence and Karim 12). Daisy’s life as an Aboriginal woman reads like a long list of tragedies: stolen from her family as a child; forced to serve a white family without a wage; sexually exploited (probably by her own father); coerced into abandoning

⁹¹ New research in neuroscience also suggests that trauma has the potential to affect genetics and be passed down to one’s offspring biologically: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-25156510> and <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/21/study-of-holocaust-survivors-finds-trauma-passed-on-to-childrens-genes> (accessed 14 Dec. 2013; 22 Aug. 2015).

⁹² For example, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a quintessentially western construct, and as such it is most readily applicable in *My Place* to Sally’s father Bill, a white Australian World War II veteran whose experience as a prisoner of war in Europe helped turn him into a violent paranoid alcoholic.

her first daughter and leaving the second one in a children's home. She internalises ill-treatment as Aboriginal women's lot, and consequently tries to distance herself from her Aboriginality by concealing her (and their) origins from her family. Rosanne Kennedy reads Daisy's attempts at racial passing as a way of breaking the cycle of abuse of Aboriginal women in Australia, for she "refuses to reproduce herself or the conditions of her own marginality" (2011, 344). There are echoes of these expectations of marginality when Daisy entreats Sally: "Don't ever let a man do that to you. You watch out for Amber [Sally's daughter]. You don't want her bein' treated like a black woman" (Morgan 337). Daisy's plea supports Madsen's statement that the pathological definition of trauma as an unexpected and extreme experience "fails to account both for the inherited nature of certain forms of historical trauma and equally for the traumatic nature of everyday life for vulnerable people who daily confront with fear and helplessness the absence of safety or security in their lives" (63).⁹³ Sally, who has led a relatively sheltered life despite her family's poverty and her father's instability, attempts to right the wrongs inflicted on her relatives by reclaiming her Indigenous identity and rewriting what it means for *her* to be a black woman.

Despite a strong indictment of passing among Indigenous activists such as Jackie Huggins who call people like Daisy "traitors," writers of the younger generations such as Anita Heiss acknowledge that families denying their Aboriginal ancestry for generations often "attempt to shield family members from the retribution that can come when mainstream society knows such a deep dark secret" (1993 460; 2012 166). The fact that Sally's mother tells her to pretend to be Indian when asked where she comes from at school (since white Australian children cannot accept her answer that she is Australian) speaks volumes about the particular form of racism directed towards Indigenous people and its potential to cause transgenerational insidious trauma.⁹⁴ The effect on the reader of the public unveiling of traumatic

⁹³ See discussion of Agamben's "bare life" in a later section.

⁹⁴ See also Rob Nixon's definition of slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all [...], a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales." (2).

histories in novel form has been deemed problematic by critics of *My Place* who argue that the book sells a version of Aboriginality tailored to be palatable for white readers.⁹⁵ Schaffer and Smith offer another possible interpretation, however, when they remark that “[s]hock and shame can lead to an ethics of recognition and gestures of reconciliation. They can also provoke feelings of guilt and denial” (110). While guilt can be a powerful drive for recognition and atonement, in the case of settler guilt it also has the potential to undermine and endanger the very legitimacy of the state. Moreover, if “narratives of shaming place tellers in the position of victim, with listeners as advocates and agents,” this can reinforce power relations (Schaffer and Smith 111). Casting Indigenous characters as victims of white society and government can cement white readers’ patronising attitudes towards Indigenous people and their plight without making them question their own standpoint and subject position.

The analysis of collective memory in relation to trauma is most effectively brought to the fore by interdisciplinary research. Indeed, “psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma” through the study of traumatic narrative (Caruth, 1995 4). Caruth observes that “trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures,” not by drawing equivalences or establishing a hierarchy of oppressions, but by fostering our ability to listen to each other across the colonial boundaries of the mind (1995 11). One of the main issues with psychologising literary forms, however, is the danger of ethnocentrism that she fails to address. If many postcolonial texts, and especially life-writing by women of colour, appear to reflect the fragmentation of identity enforced by colonialism, it is necessary to remember that, as we mentioned in the introduction, a fragmented identity is only abnormal (and thus pathologised) when a unified identity is normalised (Roth 10). Objectivity, universality, and rationality are Enlightenment concepts that do not resonate with the reality of most cultures across the globe. Psychology as a discipline is mostly concerned with framing subjects as patients and treating what is “wrong” with them according to medical handbooks. By asserting colonial control over definitions of selfhood and

⁹⁵ For the controversy surrounding Aboriginality in *My Place* see Jackie Huggins’s “Always Was, Always Will Be” and Bain Attwood’s “Portrait of the Aboriginal as an Artist.”

establishing its own standard of normalcy, mainstream psychology has mostly failed Indigenous people through the individualisation of trauma and a flagrant disregard for institutional factors such as sexism and racism, and the effect of systemic and cultural violence on the psyche.⁹⁶ This raises the issue of the need for historical consciousness to acknowledge and take into account local context in the treatment of trauma.

Faced with the western bias of trauma theory, Stef Craps and Gert Buelens advocate for “theorizing colonization in terms of the infliction of a collective trauma and reconceptualizing postcolonialism as a post-traumatic cultural formation” (2008, 2). Trauma and colonialism are inextricably linked in Indigenous writing, and postcolonialism is therefore associated with revealing traumatic histories and searching for ways of healing. This is especially salient in women’s writing because of gender differences already inherent to the field of trauma studies (Andermahr and Pellicer-Ortin 4). As Laura S. Brown argues in her essay “Not Outside the Range,” “[a] feminist perspective [on trauma studies] reminds us that traumatic events do lie within the range of normal human experience” (110). Gendered violence examined in Chapter 1, such as domestic abuse, rape, and sexual exploitation, must be understood as traumatic because of its effect on the victims and despite its frequent, even “everyday,” occurrences. Trauma is racialised as well as gendered, and as Kennedy notes in the Australian context, “sexual abuse must be seen as part of the lived conditions of ‘the colonial experience,’ which dictated that poor black women were available to white men on their terms” (1997, 241). The fact that Indigenous

⁹⁶ See Chapter 1 and Otto Heim’s definition of systemic violence as ‘the violence of a particular cultural and economic mode of production, as well as the violence that results, in the form of terrorism and sabotage, from the confrontation between that system and another culture of production’. Settler countries offer a fertile ground for systemic violence between the Indigenous and immigrant cultures. Johan Galtung on the other hand defines cultural violence as ‘aspects of culture [...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence’. Both forms of violence (systemic and cultural) are often the cause of instances of direct (physical) violence allowing the dominant group to blame the minority group for what is presented and perceived as unbridled savagery by those who control media representations. Indeed, Galtung continues, ‘a major form of cultural violence indulged in by ruling elites is to blame the victim of structural violence who throws the first stone, [...] stamping him as “aggressor”’. Wilful ignorance of the effects of systemic and cultural violence serves the purpose of reasserting white dominance and power over Indigenous (and migrant) lives through a system inherited from the colonial era to control and discipline their bodies (see also Foucault).

women are told to accept their victimisation as “normal” does not make it any less traumatic.

In the framework of intergenerational trauma, Van Styvendale introduces what she terms “the *trans/historicity* of Native trauma” to “challenge the very assumption of trauma as rooted in event, where ‘event’ is defined, as it most commonly is, as a singular, recognizable, and chronologically bounded incident” (203; original emphasis). Like Brown, Van Styvendale advocates for a definition of trauma that would take into account its inherited historical nature. Indeed she calls native trauma “[c]umulative, collective, intergenerational, and intersubjective,” four notions that are also central to Indigenous writing in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Van Styvendale 203). Intergenerational native trauma “takes place and is repeated in multiple epochs and, in this sense, exceeds its historicity” as a form of “trans/historical trauma located in the removals and relocations of the nineteenth-century reservation period as well as in the contemporary conditions and consequences of extra-tribal adoption, assimilationist policies, urban relocation, and the identity politics of authentic Nativeness” (Van Styvendale 204, 221). On the other side of the Pacific, 19th century massacres and mass displacements compound with early and mid-20th century child removals and forced assimilation, and with late 20th century white supremacist capitalism, as the roots of Indigenous trans/historical trauma.

Representing collective and individual trauma in writing is crucial to the decolonisation of the Indigenous self and community and to challenge colonial constructs, although Michael Roth reminds us that a “‘successful’ representation (a representation that others understand) of trauma will necessarily seem like trivialization, or worse, like betrayal. The intensity of a trauma is what defies understanding, and so a representation that someone else understands seems to indicate that the event wasn’t as intense as it seemed to be (91). The absence of representation entails forgetting, so the trade-off has to be considered by the victim or witness of trauma who attempts to represent the unrepresentable. In the familial narratives under study in this chapter, we must turn to the witness who writes the story as an agent of remembering and forgetting trauma in her own right.

4.3.2 Witnesses

Testimony is defined by psychiatrist Dori Laub as “the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes [...] the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself” (85). Such a narrator occupies several positions at the same time and is simultaneously steeped in the action because of her family link and vested interest, but also detached from it because of her temporal, and often geographical, distance from the initial trauma. The reader is removed even further, and therefore literary testimony is tasked with “open[ing] up in that belated witness, which the reader now historically becomes, the imaginative capacity of perceiving history – what is happening to others – *in one’s own body*, with the power of sight (or insight) usually afforded only by one’s own immediate physical involvement” (Felman 108; original emphasis). Shoshana Felman describes a form of empathy close to that of Dominick LaCapra discussed in Chapter 2 and that allows the witness to take an active part in the text, thus precluding the risks of voyeurism and passive entertainment. For the reader, literary testimonies are received belatedly after “this *historical gap* which the event created in the collective witnessing of the individual testimonies” (Laub 84; original emphasis). Laub and Felman are writing about Holocaust testimonies, but this is also true of *Stolen Generations* narratives, which became available and entered mainstream Australia’s collective consciousness in the late 1980s with the publication of *My Place*, over 15 years after the official end of state-orchestrated child removals.

Following white historian Bain Attwood’s article on *My Place*, Huggins criticises Morgan by stating that her “Aboriginality is forged through the creation of the text rather than the reverse” (1993 459). This is where communal life-writing comes into play, as Morgan’s ties with her Aboriginality and her people’s culture and traditions is inextricably bound up with her love for her grandmother. At the end of the novel after Daisy’s death, Sally’s sister Jill asserts: “[w]ith her gone, we could pass for anything. Greek, Italian, Indian... what a joke. We wouldn’t want to, now.

It's too important. It'd be like she never existed. Like her life meant nothing, not even to her own family" (354). Morgan's advocacy for Aboriginal rights is intimately tied to the experiences of Daisy, Arthur, and Gladys, and from the discovery of the injustice done to her own relatives, the narrator's awareness expands to encompass Aboriginal collective trauma. Although Marianne Hirsch first developed the notion of postmemory in relation to the experience of the Holocaust, like most trauma theory, the genocide, displacement, and dispossession Indigenous people were subjected to by colonial powers have fostered large-scale individual and cultural trauma leaving significant marks on the contemporary Indigenous psyche. Postmemory in particular describes "the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they 'remember' only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that [...] constitute memories in their own right" (2008 106). The postmemory of the survivor's children enables a "pure" form of witnessing that is also faith in the witness's account from one who has not experienced trauma first hand, and whose telling is always mediated by her parents' experience.

Giorgio Agamben's work on witnessing, on the other hand, traces the etymology of the word back to the Latin *superstes*, meaning "a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it" (17). I argue that if the victim witnesses the traumatic event from beginning to end, the survivor's witnessing goes beyond that, because they have to deal with what comes after, with loss and mourning, and with the knowledge of what destruction and death leave in their wake. Agamben derives this notion from Holocaust survivor Primo Levi's concept of the lacuna of testimony, which posits that survivors are not true witnesses (Agamben 83-84; Levi 33). Survivors live with the knowledge and the pain, which they pass on to their children, and yet a Eurocentric individualist perspective might not see it as a desirable or even a possible outcome for children to work through their forbears' experience of historical trauma. Where Agamben asserts that the one who bears witness is actually bearing witness to the impossibility of the task of bearing witness, I argue that it is possible to bear witness to the individual and collective consequences of genocide through one's children (34). Indeed the children as descendants of those who have

survived annihilation and are therefore twice removed from the initial trauma, hold a privileged position to counter what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls the “doubt” of those who have not seen the gas chambers with their own eyes or experienced them (3). This disbelief of large-scale horror and massacre has been aptly formulated by Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* thus: “to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt” (7). When this pain leads to death, only the survivor is left with the certainty of what they have witnessed and they pass this down to their children who, although they did not experience the trauma first-hand, accept to shoulder the witness’s burden of passing the information on in a doubtful world. It is sadly common for testimony and life-writing such as *My Place* that reveal racist discrimination and ill-treatment to be questioned by the revisionist press as inaccurate and inauthentic.⁹⁷

In *Bloom*, the women of the Spry family illustrate the inextricable link between the transmission of trauma and the urgency of survival. Mrs Spry does not recall setting fire to her parents’ house and causing their death when she was a toddler, and only the scars, from the torture inflicted upon her by an impersonal “they” who burnt her arms with matches as a punishment, function as the defunct memory written on her body (Morey 54). The scars are literal inscriptions of absent memories Mrs Spry cannot escape from without consciousness-altering drugs such as opium and cannabis. When her former partner Jeremiah gives her opium to keep away her traumatic returns in the forms of nightmares she can never remember, she tells herself: “Patience, [this] will all be history. Eventually. All I have to do is survive” (Morey 49). Oblivion is necessary for Mrs Spry’s survival and becomes her default mode of being, as she waits the nightmares out to free herself from traumatic returns. Connie, on the other hand, is an empty vessel and the repository of others’ memories: shortly before Mrs Spry dies, Connie spends time “collecting her words. ‘I only want to take the things I cherish,’ she said” (Morey 82-3). Connie listens to grandmother’s painful memories, and in so doing allows her to unburden herself: “Mrs Spry spent the long afternoons of her final winter in Goshen transferring the

⁹⁷ See *Quadrant* magazine’s Stolen Generations denial: <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2010/01-02/why-there-were-no-stolen-generations/> and <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2010/01-02/why-there-were-no-stolen-generations-part-two/> (accessed 17 Sept. 2013),

things she no longer wished to remember, to me, the forgetting person. Lightening her load until, at last, she too began to float” (Morey 37). Connie does not feel any heavier for shouldering Mrs Spry’s burden, and since she does not transfer the knowledge of these stories to the reader, we can infer that the memories, released into the ether, are soon gone and forgotten by Connie.

Pre-contact Māori culture did not use alphabet writing, yet it possessed many forms of inscriptions to record memories, including carving and moko, itself a form of carving on the face and the body (Gell 237; Te Awakotuku et al. 8) The absence of inscription of Mrs Spry’s memories, either on paper or in traditional Indigenous forms, ensures their loss and the subsequent survival of her descendants. In both *Bloom* and *My Place*, the younger generation record the stories of their elders and relieves them of their pain, as Mrs Spry and Daisy die shortly after they complete their recording sessions, having made peace with themselves and their racial and cultural allegiances through their descendant. Moreover, Mrs Spry’s first name, Algebra, comes from the Arabic *al jebr*, meaning the reunion of broken parts.⁹⁸ Constant, on the other hand, is a mathematical term opposed to the variable; a constant function always gives the same result, no matter how much its components change. Hence Connie’s own stability in cultural terms: ““That’s your job, Connie. To remember. To keep the home fires burning.’ Nanny had said it to me so many times” (Morey 14). Nanny’s word, the word of Māori ancestors, guides Connie through the present by assigning her the task that befits her talent as a writer: that of recording and sharing the stories of her people that need recording and sharing, and forgetting the stories that need forgetting in order to ensure their survival.⁹⁹

Daisy’s story is the final object of Sally’s quest in *My Place*. Her narrative remains the most incomplete, full of holes and silences, and unspeakable secrets she takes to the grave. The few revelations she makes to her granddaughter nevertheless uncover a fertile ground of silence and secrets, ideal for trauma to grow. It is to dispel these secrets and fill this silence that Sally decides to write the story of her

⁹⁸ Online Etymology Dictionary: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=algebra> (accessed 6 Dec. 2013).

⁹⁹ In a later section we will see how Connie enacts the Māori practice of *ahi kā*, or burning the fires of occupation.

family. As Finn puts it, *My Place*'s layering of utterances is also an attempt to "go back and piece together a cohesive narrative from the fragments that remain. In order to fill in the gaps, each narrative builds on and is built upon by the next, creating layers of meaning in the form of hybridised utterance" and together they form a collective story of transgenerational trauma (20). Daisy's secrets and refusals also serve as a reminder of the intrusiveness of the practice of transcribed autobiography (Longley 16). They lend credibility to the text since the central mysteries of who Daisy's father and who Gladys's father were are never disclosed, or rather the reader is given several names by unreliable and biased sources such as Alice and Judy Drake-Brockman, respectively wife and legitimate daughter of Daisy's employer and possible father (as well as Gladys's possible father) Howden.

Telling her story via the re-enactment of, and release from, the past through a form of talking cure allows Daisy to shed the layers of fear suffocating her since childhood and throughout her adult life. The main difference with the western concept of talking therapy however is that, as in *Bloom*, the stories are not told to a neutral professional but shared with a direct descendant who has a strong connection with the "patient" and a personal stake in the stories as one constitutive of her own identity. When Daisy insists on being taken to the hospital so she does not die in her daughter's house, in a surprising twist since she always refused to see a doctor, the change becomes obvious. Re-living and telling her story to her granddaughter (and her daughter) has liberated Daisy and allowed her to be whole again, to remember and be re-membered, the retrieved past acting like a prosthetic limb to support her in her walk into death, just as the act of writing the book permits Morgan to finally feel whole. Moreover, Whitehead in *Trauma Fiction* notes that "[t]he multiplicity of testimonial voices suggests that recovery is based on a community of witnesses" (88). Healing family trauma is a collective endeavour undertaken by multiple voices, sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory, yet weaving a whole akin to Rita Charon's "quilt-unity" (75).

Sally witnesses Daisy's trauma through her testimony and acts as identifying witness for her grandmother via the novel itself (Kennedy 1997, 244-5). An identifying witness in legal terms is an individual who personally knows and affirms

the identity of a person, in this case Daisy's double identity as a) an Aboriginal woman and b) a victim of colonial trauma. The mechanics of kinship and ethnic affiliation function in such a way as to associate the awakening and development of Sally's race consciousness with her involvement in the call for reparations for Aboriginal collective trauma, enabling her to be simultaneously witness and attorney for her mother and grandmother, like Tarena who acts as both attorney and witness to her mother's claim over the pearl-shell butterfly in *Butterfly Song* (Kennedy 1997, 245). Their family stories are unique, yet they exceed individual experience, testify to collective trauma, and join a large-scale call for reparations (Van Styvendale 213).

Laub distinguishes between three separate levels of witnessing: "the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing" (75). In this framework, Daisy, Mrs Spry, and Lily's witnessing is on the first level; Sally, Connie, and Tarena's is on the second; and we as readers witness on the third level. This does not dilute the "true" experience of the primary witness but shows how interconnected witnessing and testifying are (Kennedy 235). The distant, or secondary, witness according to LaCapra is the one who "resists full identification and the dubious appropriation of the status of victim through vicarious or surrogate victimage [but] may nonetheless undergo empathic unsettlement or even muted trauma" (71). The victims' children, descendants of colonised people, are secondary witnesses who may encounter trauma at a remove, yet their relation to it is real in psychological, cultural, and historical terms. Despite trauma's resistance to understanding, its presence in the mind and in the body of the living reveals the imperative of survival (Caruth, 1996 10). The younger generation – Sally, Connie, and Tarena – is the bearer of postmemory: "the child who is alive because survival was indeed possible" (2001 28). Survival is not only possible but indeed necessary to ward off erasure, and it is my contention that Indigenous literatures allow the reader to explore the postmemory of subsequent generations as the original traumatic events of colonisation recede but their consequences remain. This is enacted through "repossessing one's life story [and] giving testimony" in order to ensure the survival of the marginalised community (Laub 85; Gugelberger and Kearney 11).

4.4 *Survivance*

4.4.1 *Survival*

The trauma of the survivor of colonialism, the Indigenous person who is alive today in a settler country, is also a victory, for to have survived centuries of genocide is to live on with the trauma of a stolen identity. In the words of Native American writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor, “survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence” (1998 15). Vizenor contradicts the idea of survival as desirable, for it is incomplete and unsatisfactory. It is not enough to merely survive, to escape death. If survival is the opposite of annihilation, survivance is the opposite of loss, defeat, and oblivion, the avowed goals of Indigenous genocide aiming to kill those who resist and assimilate those who cannot. Hence the close links between survivance on the one hand and endurance, remembrance, and resistance on the other (Breinig 40). Vizenor also uses the archaic term *sovenance* to differentiate it from remembering: “Native *sovenance*,” he writes, “is that sense of presence in remembrance, that trace of creation and natural reason in native stories; once an obscure noun, the connotation of *sovenance* is a native presence” (1998 15; original emphasis). Vizenor’s focus is on presence and action, on the will of the native writer to re-inscribe herself into the greater national and global narratives, and to bring in elements of her native culture to assert their on-going presence and relevance in the contemporary era.

To ensure the survival and survivance of Indigenous communities, the authors under scrutiny in this chapter address collective trauma, defined by Kai Erikson as “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (187). In Australia, collective trauma has its roots in massacres and child removal, while in Aotearoa/New Zealand it has been caused mainly by dispossession and marginalisation, among other factors. In both countries, Erikson’s image of the

community as a collective body, and therefore of collective trauma as a bodily wound (closer to the Greek etymology of the word) are relevant due to the importance of kinship. He adds:

Sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of mind and body [and] traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, and ethos – a group culture, almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up. (Erikson 185)

The impact of colonialism on Indigenous individuals and communities has resulted in the emergence of new forms of being-together, and like the Spry brain remaining whole despite *Bloom*'s missed connections, community tissues reform and strengthen through horizontal communication and sharing among its members, as well as vertical transmission between generations.

The narrative structure of *My Place* enacts a spiralling movement toward Indigenous survivance in the way it anticipates aspects of *Bringing Them Home* in 1997, with its detailed summary of the widespread impact on Aboriginal communities of child removal policies. Whitlock argues that “the emotive force of *Bringing Them Home* testimony engaged readers in a particular way, one that was generated by the figure of the child as victim, most specifically through the tropes of the stolen child, and the rhetoric of ‘coming home’” (2001 203; Schaffer and Smith 111). However, the motif of archetypal return is subverted in Indigenous women's writing and rejected as insufficient and overly nostalgic, as opposed to their own narratives that look simultaneously to the past and the present, and use this rebuilt temporal thread to advocate for a better future. The three extended flashbacks containing the stories of Arthur, Gladys and Bill, and Daisy are actual return journeys into the past, both in the historical sense and in the sense of the mythic past before the birth of the author and the irruption of trauma in her family. Each secondary narrator takes Sally, and the reader, on a journey backward to their chosen beginning, and work their way forward through to the present day. Remembering is thus accompanied by a return into past memories in much the same way as a pilgrimage to visit the birthplace of one's ancestors is a return into a theoretical past, unknown to the narrator, and fictional to the reader, that effects the decolonization of

the writing/written self and community. It is also a return to the present through the acknowledgement that these memories are indeed of a past era but need to be passed down to the next generation.

4.4.2 *Transmission*

In *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, Hirsch highlights “the importance of female transmission and generational continuities among women” (1989, xi). She traces the filiation from Greek authors of the Antiquity all the way to western postmodern feminist authors via Victorian women writers. The central role of transmission in Indigenous women’s writing that we have seen throughout this thesis is observable in daughter-mother-grandmother relationships. At the end of Morey’s *Bloom*, Rose begins to take photographs of people and one of her self-portraits “in the manner of” reminds Connie of Nanny Smack: “[n]ot in any real sense. There’s something about the eyes and the indomitable set of the jaw. The desire to survive and to remember. ‘Strong women,’ I think. ‘Maybe that’s it’” (249). Nanny Smack taking the picture and putting it in her kete, or basket, closes the generational loop by returning Rose-as-Nanny Smack to the vast historical memory of the 19th century ghost of a Māori freedom fighter whose struggle for ancestral lands is “still going, but a different way of fighting now” (Morey 14). Connie, tasked by Nanny Smack with “keep[ing] the home fires burning,” carries forward the wars of the past with the weapons of the present as she uses her profession as a writer to practice ahi kā, the Māori cultural concept literally meaning to burn the fires of occupation (Morey 14). The online Māori Dictionary defines ahi kā thus:

title to land through occupation by a group, generally over a long period of time. The group is able, through the use of *whakapapa*, to trace back to primary ancestors who lived on the land. They held influence over the

land through their military strength and defended successfully against challenges, thereby keeping their fires burning.¹⁰⁰

The definition is not dissimilar from that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Native Title, which requires proof of on-going tie to the land since the pre-contact period. As a writer, Connie embodies the memory of her family and her people, and thus the means of passing down this memory to future generations.

If “the transmission of traumatic stories both as a means of healing ‘racial’ melancholia and of forming a matrilineal identity” is at the core of women’s trauma life-stories, then paradoxically the transmission of traumatic memory plays a crucial role in the healing process (Andermahr and Pellicer-Ortin 7). The concern with passing down memories from ancestors to descendants through the medium of the writing self is also present in *Butterfly Song* with Tarena’s forethought for her descendants:

They say each generation draws from the spiritual strength of those who came before. We might not know them in this physical space, but their lessons are timeless. Their wisdom compounds. Our mentors are our mothers, our fathers. Our families, our ancestors. The people we love. The people who give us breath. Our places, our lands, our waters. Our homes, our ways. Our stories and songs. The things we all long to dream about. It’s a cycle, and cultural circle, and when the time comes, my dear great-great-grandchildren, you will remember my story, you will draw from my strength, and you will know I’ll always be there with you. (Janke 292)

The continuing presence of the ancestor, in this case of the living author-narrator who is in the process of becoming an ancestor herself, is the through line that gives law to the world. The cyclic renewal of generations allows for the renewal of cultural memory by remembering what needs to be remembered and forgetting what needs to be forgotten in order to ensure the survival of the Shaw family and the wider Torres Strait Islander community, as well as the survivance of their Indigenous culture.

In *Bloom*, three generations of women living under the same roof, along with the ghost Nanny Smack who provides a link with the past that is cultural rather than

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<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=ahi+ka> (accessed 9 Oct. 2015).

biological, reassert Māori presence through the matrilineal line and the collapse of past and future into a timeless present. Roth argues that “at every moment our sense of ourselves is dependent on the proper placement of the past *as past*” (9; original emphasis). What does it mean to place the past in the present through the (anti)colonial haunting of a Māori ghost? Morey collapses memory and history to create a sense of collective self across time periods reminiscent of the Māori conception of time as cyclical and not linear (Simms 226; Fuchs 181). Across the Tasman Sea in *My Place*, Sally reveals her desire to write the book for her children so they know who they are, and to reform a matrilineal identity that was disrupted by Daisy’s removal. The possibility of renewal is embedded in the multi-cyclical, or spiralling, nature of the novel with its layering of utterance and time shifts interrupting the linear narrative of Sally’s investigation. As the earliest published text discussed in this chapter, *My Place* plays a pioneering role in the narrative transmission of Stolen Generations memory, with Sally’s own autobiographical testimony creating “the conditions for the other stories to appear in the appropriate sequence down a line which represents in a crucial way the *deferment of (narrative) authority*” (Muecke 134; original emphasis). Not only does Sally’s story open a space for Arthur, Gladys, and Daisy’s testimonies, but the novel itself garnered critical and public interest which created the conditions for the publication of subsequent Aboriginal women’s life-stories.

Rothberg highlights two narrative forms appearing frequently in texts about genocides and massacres that call upon multidirectional memory for the transmission and healing of historical trauma: “*narratives of detection and narratives of intergenerational conflict and transgenerational transmission*” (285; original emphasis). The detection of Sally’s origins through the intergenerational transmission of trauma in a downward movement, from grandmother to granddaughter, and of healing in an upward direction, from granddaughter to grandmother, enacts multidirectional memory on familial and cultural levels. Similarly, Tarena’s detection of the origins of the pearl shell butterfly in *Butterfly Song* is motivated by her mother’s request and the desire to retrieve the memory of her late grandmother. In *Bloom*, Connie may not be the active agent of detection, but she receives the stories of her sister, mother, and grandmother, and accepts her duty

to record and pass them down. Morris's *Rangatira* also engages with memory at metatextual level, with the author herself researching and detecting details of her ancestor's life and re-imagining the intergenerational link between them. For Indigenous people, therefore, colonisation is "the founding trauma – the trauma that paradoxically becomes the basis for collective or personal identity, or both" (LaCapra 81). Before colonisation, there were no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders but hundreds of discrete nations. Similarly, there were no Māori people but dozens of different iwi. Colonisation as the founding trauma of Indigenous identity is addressed by Indigenous authors in various ways: exploited, for example to foster intercultural solidarity with other Indigenous people; sublimated, through art and reassertions of survival; fought, via anti-colonial activism and demands for reparations; but more prominently healed, by passing down the memories to the younger generations.

4.5 Conclusion: Returning Home

Thus, the process of transmission and healing of traumatic memory is framed in terms of a return to an idealised past or motherland in the four texts. In both *Butterfly Song* and *My Place*, the narrator undertakes a form of pilgrimage to a place she has never seen but that is entrenched in the memory of her family. For Tarena, it is Thursday Island, the administrative centre of the Torres Strait Islands, which her grandmother and grandfather left in the 1940s. For Sally, it is Corunna Downs station, in north Western Australia, which her grandmother left when she was removed from her mother and placed into service with the Drake-Brockman family. In *Bloom*, Connie's return is to the Goshen pub, where she grew up with her sister, mother, and grandmother. Revisiting the physical point of origin of the matrilineal line is all the more important since family ties were severed by displacement. Whitehead argues that, "[a]lthough memory is strongly attached to place, the effect of trauma, it seems, has been to destroy the symbolic function of place" (10). Population displacement and child removal have given rise to a situation where place

is vital yet out of reach for many Indigenous people. Through stories of return and healing, the authors (relational selves) attempt to bridge the rift between people and place caused by colonisation (an intersubjective act).

Rangatira on the other hand presents a more complex form of double return. In travelling to England, Paratene undertakes the return journey that British colonisers to Aotearoa/New Zealand never took, at the same time as he visits the Queen in the centre of the British Empire who talks about “my Maori people” as if they were children returned to her bosom at last (Morris 124). Of his own return to Aotearoa/New Zealand after the year-long trip Paratene says:

I have been to England, travelling so much further than our ancestors, those greatest of voyagers. I thought that home waited for me, unchanging, and that I could re-take my place there, tend my fire. But nothing is unchanging. I saw that when I was a younger man, and everything that I grew up believing and understanding was swept away. (Morris 284)

The sense of wisdom gained not only through experience but also via the narrative medium of remembering the trip and writing the biography is typical of the reflexive form of memoirs. Upon his return, Paratene founds a school for Māori and Pākehā children and learns English, although he keeps this knowledge to himself. He witnesses the dispossession of his home Hauturu, or Little Barrier Island, and of his people; yet in his awareness of the changing nature of things he displays quasi-universal qualities commonly associated with the figure of the sage in most cultures, including European and pre-contact Māori. In ancient Greek philosophy, the Stoics accepted the world and its injustices as natural, while in Māori thought time is cyclical and change is part of the natural order of things. In many ways, Paratene’s characterisation is at the crossroads of both cultures and allows him to retrospectively embody a syncretic male figure of fortitude and forbearance. The narrative structure of *Rangatira* also resembles that of a two-dimensional coiled spring, with parallel time lines representing the 1863 trip to England and the 1886 pose for Lindauer’s painting crossing the arabesque of the story. The novel starts with Paratene making his way to Lindauer’s studio, and ends with the recollections of his return from England to New Zealand, that is the return journey back home.

In *My Place*, returning to Corunna Downs allows Sally and Gladys to experience first-hand the living conditions of their extended family and inhabit, albeit briefly, the same space as their mother and grandmother when she was a child. This is a crucial part of their journey, for on their way back to Perth, Gladys and Sally feel “[l]ike we’d suddenly come home and now we were leaving again. But we had a sense of place, now” (Morgan 230). This sense of place is inextricable from that of belonging to the people who inhabit the place, as landscapes in north Western Australia are described by Daisy watching the video of the trip according to the human activity that took place there (Morgan 235). Morgan proposes reconnecting with the land as one possible way to heal the trauma of removal, even the double removal of Daisy, taken away as a child and who lost her elder daughter to the Stolen Generations. Daisy’s severed ties with Marble Bar in the Pilbara region are reconnected through her daughter and granddaughter’s pilgrimage; even if she does not set foot there, her flesh and blood do, and Daisy herself works through her trauma by proxy of their family bonds. Since the phantoms of child removal and incest were passed downward to Gladys and Sally, they have the power to break the circle and propose a form of healing upward to Daisy.

Thus, by presenting the healing of individual and collective trauma as a transgenerational dialogue anchored in national history, Indigenous women writers echo a holistic approach to the psyche as a collective consciousness shared by kin, rather than a transcultural collective unconscious. In contexts where intergenerational transmission has been interrupted, it befalls the younger generations to relieve the older ones of the wrongs inflicted by colonialism by helping them re-live their life-stories to bridge the gap between the present day and the past. Memory functions as a multidirectional channel for traumatic returns and renewals, and a similar focus on intersubjectivity is present in the four novels under scrutiny in this chapter, from Connie’s collection of Mrs Spry’s memories to Tarena’s repossession of Francesca’s pendant, Sally’s uncovering of Daisy’s past, and Morris’s writing of Paratene’s trip. For Madsen, Indigenous literary expressions of trauma are “reimaginings that are always provisional, always-already under erasure and in need of renewal” (81). The pressure of erasure accounts for the multiplication of Indigenous women’s life-writing narratives in the 1980s, when the awareness of the need to tell and retell the

stories that settlers do not want to hear was at its strongest, and tell they did, until we, as non-Indigenous readers, could not pretend not to hear them anymore. By writing the stories of their forbears, Indigenous women writers also enact a different kind of return: the return of a gift passed down through generations and constitutive of their identity. I would like to return now to the opening quotation of this chapter by Alice Walker: “And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read” (407). Morgan, Janke, Morey, and Morris, like the other authors in this thesis, keep the fires burning, grow the flowers, and read aloud to all the letter of their ancestors.

Conclusion:

“Self is a subjective colony”

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that Indigenous women writers explore the ways in which violence, care, language, and memory are intersubjective acts that participate in the construction of selfhood and relationships. Through a concern with relationality and an engagement with the themes outlined above, Indigenous women's literature is a site of resolution of the problem posed by Marcia Langton's assertion in the introduction of this thesis that "self is a subjective colony" (1993 54). Decolonising the Indigenous self via writing in English has at its heart the tension between Indigenous subject and colonising language, which the twelve authors under study navigate in various ways and using diverse techniques, tackling similar issues but reaching different outcomes and resolutions.

One constant in the corpus is that people are always at the centre of the debate, especially Indigenous people and the challenges they are facing to ensure the survival of their culture. If a thorough knowledge of Aboriginal and Māori history and culture is preferable for the scholar with an ambition to research Indigenous literature, nothing prevents the average English-speaking European reader from enjoying reading the texts under study and finding elements which resonate with them. If the intended reader is often Indigenous, it is because of a distinct political awareness and a commitment to the advancement of the author's respective communities. For non-Indigenous readers, the confrontation emerges from facing their own prejudices about Indigenous people and having them challenged. From Marcia Langton's subjective colony, the Indigenous self in literature becomes a land of intersubjective possibility where reclaiming control over historical narratives and modes of representations through the writer's voice actualises concrete forms of empowerment and self-determination.

Literature is indeed a privileged medium to examine multiple forms of intersubjectivity: the characters and their relationships, of course, but also the author and her influences through intertextuality, and the author and the readers via the narrative voice. This almost organic relation between the text and the self is exemplified by Elleke Boehmer's remark that "to transfigure body into narrative, to escape from being only a figure in another's text, is to effect a break in the self" (1993 274). When the self is already threatened by colonial and patriarchal

structures, the break induced by narrative can be a positive, even productive, one effecting internal and subjective healing and decolonisation. This thesis has demonstrated the prevalence of the creation and construction of an intersubjective identity through examples from contemporary Indigenous women's writing. I define the overarching theme of intersubjective acts and relational selves as a composite of what Julian Kunnie and Nomalungelo Goduka call "the cardinal principle of collective individuality" in Indigenous cultures (xix); along with "the need for affiliation, affirmation, and connection, as well as a sense of duality and multiplicity, as basic to the process of identity" which Marianne Hirsch detects in Alice Walker's writing (1989, 195); and Dominick LaCapra's notion of "the affirmation of otherness within self – otherness that is not purely and discretely other" (213). Otherness does not mean alienation but rather the acceptance of a multiplicity and fluidity within the self that influences our social relations within the community and our collective identity as relational selves.

For Rosi Braidotti, the notion of the human itself must be redefined in a post-anthropocentric manner in the contemporary moment, notably in order to stress "radical relationality, that is to say non-unitary identities and multiple allegiances" (144). Although intersubjective acts are not new to some cultures, they have entered western theory recently in the wake of post-humanist discourse. If subjectivity is "a process of auto-poiesis or self-styling," then intersubjectivity involves continual renegotiations within and between subjects (Braidotti 35). For Indigenous women writers this takes the form of a back-and-forth movement between traditions and colonial structures, female subjectivity and patriarchal culture, personal and community interests. As a result of navigating those often conflicting forces, the authors are keenly aware of the centrality of the relational aspects of selfhood. This awareness is akin to what Braidotti calls the "humbling experience of not-Oneness, which is constitutive of the non-unitary subject, anchors the subject in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and external others that are constitutive" of the self (100). It is a productive relationship between the self and herself, self and relations, and self and community, highlighted through the discussions of violence, care, language, and memory in the previous chapters.

Theoretical Implications

The main theoretical debate addressed by this thesis is the compatibility of postcolonial and Indigenist theories, in other words the validity of postcolonial criticism in regards to Indigenous literature. As we have seen in the preceding chapters with gender, disability, sociolinguistics, and trauma theories respectively, established disciplinary fields can provide valuable insights into Indigenous studies, but they should not be applied uncritically. By engaging with a range of theoretical fields and referring to Indigenous, postcolonial, and western scholars side by side, my intention is to consider them equally and encourage the scholarly community to do so too. Indigenous literature may often be studied as part of postcolonial literature, but Indigenous criticism is not a subset of postcolonial theory, as I argued in the introduction, and it would be misguided to ignore this fact.

Beside, Hugh Webb points out the following pitfall of postcolonial studies: “the ‘post-colonial’ is no longer a term operating in the classificatory spaces of literary history. It is now functioning something like a genre – a genre not only of texts but of peoples, of cultures” (35). Such generic compartmentalisation may be at odds with the progressive aims and principles of the discipline, yet the resulting categorisation is undeniably questionable. Furthermore, Webb adds that postcolonialism is “an enterprise that answers to a developing Eurocentric recognition of (and need for) a cogent, sustainable schema of theoretical explanation that can relatively unproblematically position those texts of the former ‘natives’ that otherwise would have a worryingly subversive *lack* of position” (32-3; original emphasis). From this standpoint, postcolonialism is opposing yet playing the game of western theory by positioning itself on the same discursive level, while real subversion would be an uncompromising refusal to engage with the west on its own terms. This issue is inscribed in the debate between pragmatism and radicalism in activist discourse, with both being different modes to attain the same goal, in the present case Indigenous recognition and self-determination.

Literature provides an ideal medium for the expression of such tensions, and indeed for Jace Weaver it is where the “quest for indigeneity shows itself most clearly” (2005 228). This is manifested through a renewed engagement with the colonial past and present, and a cautious forward-looking attitude to the future among the authors mentioned in this thesis. Despite cultural, ethnic, and historical differences, Australian Aboriginal and Aotearoa/New Zealand Māori women writers address comparable issues in their narratives. As we saw in Chapter 4, LaCapra argues that destructive events such as colonisation may give rise to “what may be termed founding traumas – traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity” (23). It is important to ask at this stage whether the common experience of colonial racism and sexism makes a transnational Indigenous identity possible today, and whether the founding trauma of colonisation remains the root of contemporary Indigeneity worldwide. Indeed, this line of questioning could form the basis for future transcultural research in Indigenous studies.¹⁰¹

As with the discussion of intersubjectivity and relationality, the postcolonial/Indigenist debate can benefit from insights from posthumanist discourse, which emerges from disappointment and frustration with the hypocrisy and universalist ambition of Humanism and its ableist, male-centric, and Eurocentric core. Feminist and postcolonial theorists are among the most vocal critics of Humanism, alongside those in the newer areas of ecocriticism and animal studies. Their critiques on the whole do not aim at eradicating Humanism, but rather “they propose new alternative ways to look at the ‘human’ from a more inclusive and diverse angle” (Braidotti 28). It is about broadening definitions of the human and advocating for the radical acceptance of difference in self-representation, rather than assuming the existence of a universal human nature necessarily modelled after whomever controls its definition: (white, able-bodied and able-minded, cis-

¹⁰¹ Frank Schulze-Engler defines transcultural literature as texts that “negotiate the fuzzy edges of ‘ethnic’ or ‘national’ cultures, and participate in the creation of transnational public spheres as well as transcultural imaginations and memories” (ix-x). An exploration of the transnational public sphere of Indigeneity and the transcultural imagination and memories of Indigenous people would delve deeper in the comparative aspects of this thesis.

heterosexual) man made man in his image. Unafraid of paradoxes, Humanism, “like all modernist metanarratives, lights the way to terror even as it upholds the torch of human rights,” remarks Bill Readings, who detects a humanist rhetoric at the origin of many genocides, including colonisation (128). I therefore suggest that there is potential for posthumanist discourse to enter a productive dialogue with contemporary Indigenous writing, especially as a new generation of authors comes to the fore with a unique perspective increasingly informed by globalisation.

If we are indeed living in the Anthropocene, “an age when the earth’s ecological balance is directly regulated by humanity,” then it is more crucial than ever to research in depth the human mind and how it makes sense of the world through artistic productions such as literature (Braidotti 79). The move beyond anthropocentrism advocated by posthuman thinkers aims at establishing “a position that transposes hybridity, nomadism, diasporas and creolization processes into means of re-grounding claims to subjectivity, connections and community,” in other words adapting postcolonial theoretical notions to an intersubjective, relational conception of the self and/in the community (Braidotti 50). These new knowledge practices must be located and accountable, but also inclusive and shareable in order to be truly applicable beyond Eurocentric discourse and to acknowledge Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Galison 381-2; Braidotti 157).

Future Research

This thesis has been concerned exclusively with literature published between 1984 and 2011, but a more exhaustive project would engage with art forms such as architecture, sculpture, painting and drawing, music, theatre and dance, photography and radio, and comic books. The film industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand for instance gained momentum in the 1970s with the rise to fame of directors such as Barry Barclay, Merata Mita, and Don Selwyn (who were the subjects of a symposium at the University of Leeds in 2015) but it did not achieve international widespread

recognition until the 1990s.¹⁰² Released in 2002, the film adaptation of Witi Ihimaera's young adult novel *The Whale Rider* notably won several awards at home, in America, and in Europe, including the World Cinema Audience award at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival.¹⁰³ A similar success story had already graced the on-screen adaptation of Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* almost a decade earlier.¹⁰⁴ This may be proof of the translatability of Indigenous art forms, yet it is debatable whether success may cause the depoliticisation and exoticisation of Indigenous art. For many Māori, however, attention from outside Aotearoa/New Zealand is welcome; in the words of actress Rena Owen who plays Beth Heke in the film adaptation of *Once Were Warriors*: "anything that puts the body of Maori writers, actors and directors on the international map has to be good for us. It empowers our people by giving them self-respect" (R. Brown 144).¹⁰⁵ Empowerment and self-determination are key words for the future of a total population of fewer than 800,000 members, heirs to one of the richest and less widely known cultures of the planet, and from which has sprung one of the most exciting literatures of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In 2010, Māori movies were given pride of place in the programme presented by the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art's Australian Cinémathèque in Brisbane and entitled *New Zealand Noir*, testifying once again to a strong, unabated interest overseas for cultural and artistic productions featuring Māori people in creative, technical, and acting roles.¹⁰⁶ British-born Aotearoa/New Zealand actor Sam Neill, in the documentary he wrote and directed in 1995 entitled *Cinema of Unease*, also acknowledges the place of Māori filmmaking in the national landscape and frames

¹⁰² The event "Our Own Image: The Legacies of Maori Filmmaking in Aotearoa/New Zealand" took place in Leeds on 17 Nov. 2015: <http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=AH/N003594/1> (accessed 21 Nov. 2015)

¹⁰³ Details of the World Cinema Audience award for *The Whale Rider*: http://history.sundance.org/films/2990/whale_rider (accessed 10 June 2011).

¹⁰⁴ International box office numbers for *Once Were Warriors*: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110729/business> (accessed 7 June 2011).

¹⁰⁵ According to Teresia Teaiwa, this overseas consumption of Indigenous material is not sufficient and must be accompanied by increased readership in the Pacific itself. She asks: "If our literature were consumed primarily by ourselves, and not only by university students and academics on far flung foreign shores, how much more astute and incisive might our responses to colonialism and imperialism be?" (no p. n., forthcoming 2016).

¹⁰⁶ http://qag.qld.gov.au/cinematheque/past_programs/2010/new_zealand_noir (accessed 18 Feb. 2011).

the film as a reflection of the nation's struggle to find its own identity through art. According to Neill the answer lies in the country, "the dark psyche of New Zealand itself," an intangible force present in the landscape and therefore in the society arising from it (qtd in R. Brown 146). If art reflects nature, it can also effect social change. The following suggestion can be traced in Māori literature: "there was a strong connection between national art and national life, in that narratives of social trauma [...] did more than cause concern about negative images: they awakened the consciences of their readers and even changed social policy" (R. Brown 145). This is especially true of Patricia Grace's indictment of ruthless developers in *Potiki*; Alan Duff's portrayal of violence and neglect in destitute suburban areas in *Once Were Warriors*; Alice Tawhai's unveiling of the scale of sexual and domestic violence among various ethnic communities in her short stories; and Lisa Cherrington's criticism of the failure of the Pākehā-centric mental health system to care for Māori people in *The People-Faces*. In the years to come, one of the challenges faced by Aotearoa/New Zealand will be to take these testimonies into account, and we will then be able to measure the influence of Māori literature on social policy.

In Australia, although mainstream audiences have valued Aboriginal visual arts for some time, cinema and television are also areas of growing importance for Indigenous expression. Movies such as Rachel Perkins' *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) and Wayne Blair's *The Sapphires* (2012) have garnered critical and public acclaim at home and abroad, while the TV show *Redfern Now* (2012-present), written, directed, and acted by Aboriginal people and set in the Sydney neighbourhood of Redfern, has become a social phenomenon and won several Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (ACTAA), Logie, and Deadly Awards.¹⁰⁷ In *Images of Dignity*, Stuart Murray observes that Barclay himself coined the term "Fourth Cinema" to refer to Indigenous filmmaking, and thus designate "a practice and expression that works beyond the current theorisations of global cinematic practice [and] can contain the multiple forms of Indigenous cinema as it operates on an international level, yet one that can still reflect the specifics of individual cultural formations and iterations" (2008 2). The idea of Indigenous knowledges and practices as both localised and

¹⁰⁷ For a full list of awards won by *Redfern Now* see: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2274800/awards> (accessed 26 Nov. 2015).

transcultural can provide the ground for further comparative studies of Indigenous cinema along these lines.

I heard from colleagues trained in the UK higher education system that conclusions, be they of essays, articles, or doctoral theses, should not introduce new material. In my own experience of learning the essay method in the French system, I was told during my formative years that a conclusion should end with an *ouverture*, meaning a statement or question broadening the topic and putting it in perspective, for instance by looking towards other genres not examined in the main body of the text or future developments in the discipline. The contemporary character and relative “newness” of the corpus of Indigenous women’s writing is particularly apt to such an opening related to the future of these literatures. Polynesian literature in particular is the youngest within the corpus of English-language writing, and as such it is only starting to garner widespread academic attention and public interest. Outside Aotearoa/New Zealand, Māori writing in English is gaining real attention, but many aspects of Māoritanga form a background an uninitiated reader needs to know better in order to grasp the profound meaning of spirit and ceremonials. Overseas interest accounts for the growing number and availability of reference books about Indigenous cultures available in bookshops abroad, which signals a willingness on the part of some of the international audience to educate themselves.

For scholars such as Chris Prentice, “the authenticity of Maori ethnicity [...] resides in the dynamic sense of a struggle to realign the present with the past” (1999, 159). This is also true of a dynamic Australian Aboriginal identity. In the contemporary era, increasingly pervaded by globalisation and multiculturalism, where time is impossibly accelerated for profit, and cultural differences progressively blurred by western cultural imperialism, the quest for this kind of authenticity could ensure continuing interest and a movement towards the preservation of Indigenous traditions.¹⁰⁸ In line with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s position, J. Weaver reminds us that “no knowledge is valueneutral and that, when it comes to scholarship on indigenous cultures, there is no such thing ultimately as ‘knowledge

¹⁰⁸ Such a movement would need to be driven by Indigenous people and to acknowledge the fluidity of their culture.

for knowledge's sake''' (2005 230). Any future work will have to take into account the power imbalance inherent in most research on Indigenous materials or communities. As an Indigenous researcher, finally, Jill Bevan-Brown shares the obstacles she faces from her own community: "I have heard the statement that research is a "non-Māori" activity. I disagree with this. If research is accepted as a systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge one possesses, then it must be acknowledged that Māori have been doing this for centuries" (228) We need to decolonise both methodologies and practices in order to responsibly examine Indigenous art and literature, and this includes valuing Indigenous research methods and agendas, supporting Indigenous researchers, and being accountable to Indigenous communities.

Appendix 1

Figure 1. Glossary of reo Māori terms.

Ahi kā	Title to the land
Aotearoa	Long white cloud
Aroha	Love
Haka	Posture dance
Hapū	Sub-tribe, clan
Hine	Girl
Hongi	Greeting by pressing noses/sharing breath
Hui	Gathering
Iwi	Tribe
Kai	Food
Karakia	Prayer, chant
Kaumatua	Male elder
Kaupapa	Foundation, substance
Kia ora	Hello, welcome
Kōhanga reo	Māori language nest
Kōrero	Discussion, talk
Koro	Grandfather, sir
Kuia	Grandmother, female elder
Kūmara	Sweet potato
Mana	Status, power
Māori	Normal, native
Māoritanga	Māori ways of being
Marae	Cultural grounds
Marae ātea	Courtyard
Mauri	Essential spirit, life force
Moko	Tattoo
Mokopuna	Grandchild
Noa	Free from tapu
Oriori	Lullaby
Pā	Village
Pākehā	White New Zealander
Patu	Club
Pohara	Poor
Pōrangi	Mad, insane

Pounamu	Greenstone, jade
Potiki	Last-born
Powhiri	Welcome ceremony
Puku	Stomach
Rangatira	Chief, nobility
Tamaiti, tama	Child, son
Tamariki	Children, young
Tane	Man
Tangata	People
Tangata whenua	People of the land
Tangi	Funeral
Taonga	Treasure
Tapu	Sacred, cultural imperative
Tauīwi	Non-Māori, foreigner
Tekoteko	Carved figure
Tikanga	Custom, way of doing
Tino rangatiratanga	Sovereignty, self-determination
Tipuna	Ancestor
Tohunga	Specialist in ritual matters
Tūrangawaewae	Place where one has right of residence
Tūpuna	Dialect version of tipuna
Utu	Revenge, reciprocity
Waiata	Song, poem
Wairangi	Foolish, irrational
Wairua	Spirit, psyche
Waka	Canoe
Whaikōrero	Oratory, speechmaking
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whānau	Extended family
Whakawhanaungatanga	Kinship, intersubjectivity
Whare	House
Wharekai	Dining hall
Wharehau	Meeting house
Whare tipuna	Ancestral hall
Whenua	Land

Appendix 2

Figure 2. Mapping women's mobility in Australian Aboriginal novels.

Purple: Sally Morgan and Gladys Milroy in *My Place* = Perth-Marble Bar-Perth

Red: Sue Wilson in *Steam Pigs* = Logan City-Townsville-Brisbane

Green: May Gibson in *Swallow the Air* = Wollongong-Darwin-Sydney

Brown: Tarena Shaw in *Butterfly Song* = Sydney-Thursday Island-Sydney

Black: Angel Day in *Carpentaria* = Far-north QLD-Canberra [same trajectory as Oblivia Oblivion Ethyl(ene) in *The Swan Book*]



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